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FAMILIAR
WILD BIRDS

BY

W. SWAYSLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY A. THORBURN AND OTHERS

First Series

WITH COLOURED PLATES

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PREFACE.

How much the charm of country life is due to the song of the birds it is very difficult to realise. And still less generally known is the wonderful variety of bird life in even hyper-civilised England. By many a country lad every note heard and every bird seen is alike known and recognised; but to many of those whose daily walks are limited to the stone pavements of our large cities, save that they probably know a robin and a sparrow when they see either, a bird is simply "a bird" and no more. To portray the many varieties of birds which yet visit, breed or live in England, to describe their haunts, habits, eggs, and appearance, is, therefore, a pleasant task, which may perchance add, for many, a fresh charm to their brief experiences of country life.

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GREY WAGTAIL
(⅓ Scale.)

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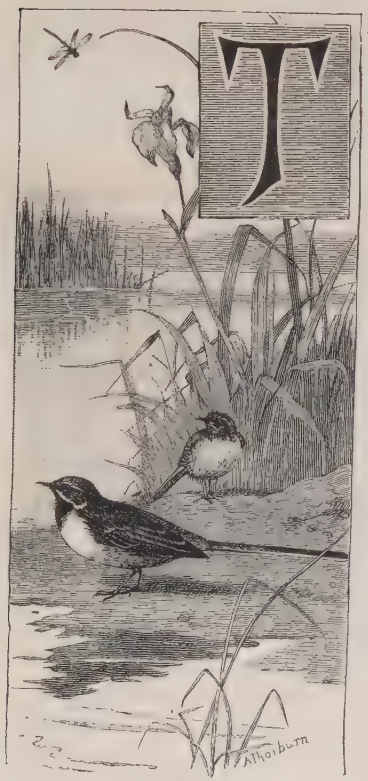
FAMILIAR WILD BIRDS.

THE GREY WAGTAIL.

Motacilla sulphurea.

Motacilla boarula.



THERE is perhaps no member of the feathered tribes found in the British Isles more elegant in shape, more nimble and dexterous in movement, or handsomer in plumage, than the Grey Wagtail. The most indifferent observer, who may chance to watch a pair of these pretty little creatures by the side of some sparkling stream, now running rapidly over stone and weed, and now flying for a few yards with graceful undulatory motion, cannot fail to be charmed with their beauty and agility.

The Grey Wagtail is a continual resident in all the southern parts of Europe, and is said to be

met with in India, Java, and Japan. In our own country it is fairly distributed over most parts, with the exception of the extreme northern counties.

The Grey Wagtail is of a retiring and solitary disposition, seldom being seen except singly or at most in pairs, and apparently eschewing altogether the society of other birds. Its favourite haunts are the sides of running streams, ditches, quarries containing water, ponds and pools, or in fact at any piece of water, if only in a tub; although like other wagtails it may now and then be seen running quickly along the top of some shed or farm outhouse in pursuit of flies or small insects. The food consists of insects, very small water-snails, and the various sorts of minute living creatures that abound on the margins of watery places in general.

The flight of the Grey Wagtail is similar to that of the other members of the family, being light, tolerably fast, and composed of a series of rapid and graceful undulations. The note is not very strong, and may be described as a shrill "tweet tweet," which is repeated in a louder key, and more frequently when the bird is suddenly disturbed and takes to flight. Under any circumstances, however, it seldom flies to any great distance, but soon returns to the waterside as before.

Its favourite nesting place is amongst the grass, or stones, or hollows in banks, and in most cases pretty near the sides of a stream. Instances, however, are upon record of this bird selecting very different homes, such as a greenhouse (passing to and fro through a broken square of glass) or a window-sill; and Morris mentions a case in which the nest was built between some railway switches, within close proximity of passing trains. The nest is constructed

of dried bents of hay and grass, fibrous roots and twigs carefully lined with hair, wool, or a few feathers. About six eggs are laid, of a greyish or dirtyish white, with markings of light-grey and brown ; they are of a short oval shape, and vary exceedingly in colour and marking.

The male bird is about eight inches in length, about half of which measurement is taken up by the tail. The bill is dusky brown ; a dark grey streak passes from the bill through the eye. Above the iris is a light buff-coloured mark, and a similar one below ; the forehead, crown, back of neck and sides of head are grey, slightly tinged with greenish yellow ; the chin and throat are black, edged with white, and buff-white in winter, changing to grey until the beginning of April. The breast, especially the lower part, is a beautiful bright yellow, in winter greyish-white with a faint tinge of yellow ; black, grey, and yellowish towards the tail. The wings are dusky black, with markings of white, and the tail is brownish-black, with the outer feathers white; the under tail coverts are bright yellow, and the legs, toes, and claws are of a brownish-yellow. The female is smaller than the male, the throat is tinged with yellow, and in summer the black patch changes to dark grey mottled with yellowish-grey. The young birds do not assume the adult plumage until after the first autumnal moult. They have a very noticeable habit of expanding the tail on first alighting, thereby plainly showing the white feathers on each side.

These wagtails are migrating birds, leaving the north for the south about August or September, and returning about February or March. They are very partial to localities, and the same birds return to the same quarters year after year ; they appear to visit certain places at

stated times, and can generally be found in a particular spot if their habits are closely studied; they also exhibit extreme pugnacity of disposition, and will readily show fight if interfered with.

It has a peculiar habit of remaining motionless if surprised, and will even allow anyone to pass near it without moving, although immediately afterwards it will fly off uttering its short call note. It is a very nice bird for an aviary, where it becomes very tame, and is universally admired. Under such circumstances it requires plenty of water and the same treatment as a nightingale.

The Grey Wagtail is often called the Dun Wagtail.

WOODLARK.
($\frac{3}{5}$ Scale.)

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THE WOODLARK.

Alauda arborea.

THIS charming songster, although neither so well known nor so highly appreciated as its near relative the Skylark, is nevertheless a most sweet and accomplished vocalist. By some ardent admirers it is even considered second only to the Nightingale, so plaintive, full, and pleasing are the melodies it utters.

It is never found so abundantly as the Skylark, although in hard weather the birds congregate in flocks in the neighbourhood of the sea-shore, roaming about in search of food, and, of course, offering irresistible temptations to destroyers of various sorts. They commonly keep in parties varying from three to twenty—occasionally single specimens are met with. They may be easily recognised

when flying by the shortness of the tail and the rounded appearance of the wings. Rough grass lands, where woods, copses, and plantations are scattered about, are the spots most resorted to by the Woodlark; and in the winter, brick-yards and stubble-fields are very favourite haunts. Amongst other places, it is commonly met with in the Weald of Sussex, and sometimes, though rarely, on the Downs.

The food consists of small seeds, grains, insects, caterpillars, and worms. In periods of long-continued frost or snow they frequent the high roads in search of food. When upon the ground, the Woodlark walks in a somewhat slow and dignified manner, except upon alighting from some aerial journey, when, as soon as it reaches *terra firma*, it usually runs for a few paces. The bird generally roosts on the ground. Its character is by no means shy or cautious, and on the near approach of danger it will often squat on the ground.

The song is uttered both when the bird is perched on the bough of some tree, and when soaring at a great height in the air. The upward flight is made by executing a series of circles, increasing in area as the bird ascends, until the extent of its ascension is reached. During these soaring movements the altitude attained is greater even than that of the Skylark, and the song is usually sustained during the entire process. Its return to mother earth is made by a similar series of graduated circular sweeps, often with the wings extended and motionless. The call-note, which is continually uttered during flight, somewhat resembles the words "tweedle, weedle, weedle," repeated several times.

The song of the Woodlark has been frequently referred

to by poets and other writers in terms of pleasure and admiration. One speaks of the

> "Wild unfrequent note of the lone Woodlark."

And Gilbert White, the eminent naturalist of Selborne, sings of the pleasures of a summer evening in the country, when

> "Blended objects fail the swimming sight,
> And all the fading landscape sinks in night,
> While high in air and poised upon his wings
> Unseen, the soft enamoured Woodlark sings."

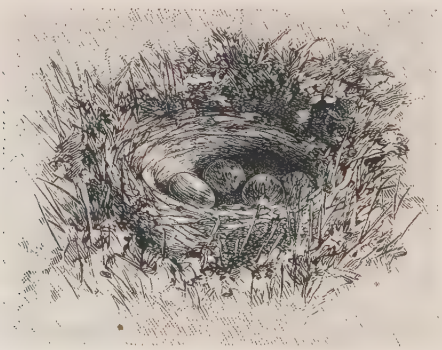
The nest is built of grass, thin fibrous roots, thin twigs, and occasionally moss, with a lining of finer grass or hair. Usually it is placed under some tuft of grass, or at the side of a stump of a tree, and at times in the side of a bank. Four or five eggs are laid, of a pale brownish-white or brownish-yellow, spotted with greyish or reddish-brown, and perhaps a few marks or lines at the larger end. The eggs have been found as early as February, but are generally laid in March; they are, however, not unfrequently found as late as July.

The plumage of the Woodlark is quiet and unpretending; the beak is dark brown above and pale yellow underneath; over the eye and ear-coverts there is a streak of pale yellowish-brown. The feathers on the top of the head are light brown, streaked with a darker shade, forming a crest, which the bird frequently elevates. The upper part of the body is wood-brown, with streaks and patches of brownish-black on the neck and back. The tail is short, and is brownish-black, triangularly tipped with white, and has a light brown feather on each side, and a couple of pale brown ones in the centre; the under parts are pale yellowish-brown, speckled with long marks of dark brown,

thinly scattered about the throat, and larger and more numerous on the breast; there are no marks on the belly; the legs, toes, and claws are brown, and the hind claw is long and curved.

There is not much difference in the appearance of the sexes; in the female the breast is said to be not so yellow, and the dark markings are larger than in the male, but it is very difficult to distinguish one from the other.

The Woodlark is found in Sussex, Hampshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire. In the extreme west and north of England it is but seldom seen. It is a constant resident in many of the southern European countries, and in the summer is said to visit Denmark, Russia, and Sweden.



CREEPER

(⅔ Scale.)

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THE CREEPER.

Certhia familiaris.

THE Creeper is one of those birds whose habits and general disposition are such as to suggest a greater degree of rarity than really corresponds with facts. It is known generally as the "Tree Creep," or "Tree Climber," and is found more or less in all parts of the British Islands. Russia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and Italy, are also mentioned as countries in which this little bird is commonly met with.

The Creeper is wonderfully active and industrious, and is seldom seen unless engaged in procuring food either for itself or its progeny. It is very shy and retiring, and as soon as it becomes aware that it is the subject of

inquisitive examination, it very quickly places the entire thickness of the tree on which it may be at work between itself and the too curious observer. In addition to its shyness, the Creeper's plumage is very sober and unobtrusive in its character, and closely resembles in colour the rough ashen-brown bark of trees, so that were it not for the piping "twee-twee" that it so frequently utters, it would be very difficult indeed to discover its whereabouts.

The Creeper feeds principally upon spiders and the various insects that abound in the bark of trees, and upon the caterpillars and beetles that are commonly found in trees, or upon old fences and wooden buildings. In ascending the trunk of a tree the movements of the bird are rapid and continuous, the tail, which is composed of stiff feathers, being curved down upon the bark, and affording its owner considerable support and assistance. The upward progress of the bird consists of a series of short quick movements—so quick, indeed, as almost to convey the idea of sliding over the surface. Every part is carefully scrutinised, and when the search, which terminates at the top of the tree, is concluded, it quickly flits to the next tree and recommences its labours, which always begin at the base and terminate at the top. The flight is undulating, and very seldom sustained for any great distance.

The nest of the Creeper is usually placed in some crack of a tree, or some sheltering inequality in the bark, and is built of dried grass, straws, twigs, and fibrous roots, lined with feathers and wool. Occasionally it is found in some crevice of a woodstack. The nest is a handsome little structure, and well worthy of notice; very frequently the crevice selected is too large for the intended domicile, and the superfluous space is cleverly filled up with a

quantity of very fine twigs. The number of eggs varies from four or five up to seven or eight. They are of a white colour, spotted — sometimes at the thick end, and sometimes all over—with reddish, or reddish-brown. The young ones are hatched in about a fortnight, and generally make their appearance about the beginning of May. The Creeper rears two broods in the year, according to Naumann; but the second brood is not so large as the first, usually numbering from three to five.

Woods and plantations are the common resorts of the Creeper, but it may be seen very often by the careful observer in those quiet country lanes where old and isolated trees are found along the hedgeside. According to some authorities the Creeper may be observed, usually in the morning and evening, by the side of watercourses and ditches, either for the purpose of drinking or bathing.

The length of this bird is from five to five and a quarter inches; the bill is long, slender, and curved downwards, the upper part being ridged and larger than the lower; the lower mandible is a dull yellowish-white, the upper, dusky-brown. The irides are brown, and a white streak runs over the eye to the nape, where it ends in a spot. The sides of the head, the crown and neck, are brownish-ash colour, with dull white spots and markings of a yellowish shade; a dusky streak runs backwards from the eye. Chin and throat are white; breast, a soiled silvery-white, yellowish on the lower part and the sides. Back resembles the neck. The wings are dusky, the feathers of the coverts being tipped with white. A band of yellowish-white runs across a portion of the wing, which forms a straight line when the wing is extended, and a wavy mark when it is closed.

The tail is a reddish or brownish ash colour, yellowish towards the outer edge; upper tail coverts are tinged with tawny rust colour; the under tail coverts, reddish-yellow tipped with white. The legs, toes, and claws are pale yellow-brown; the claws are very long and much curved.

The female resembles the male in size and plumage.

TURTLE DOVE
(⅔ Scale.)

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THE TURTLE DOVE.

Columba turtur.
Turtur auritus.

PERHAPS no bird, either in this country or elsewhere, is so inseparably connected with pleasing and sentimental associations as the Turtle Dove.

Its strong unswerving attachment to its mate, its gentle confiding disposition, and elegant appearance, have been from time immemorial the admiration of mankind. These pleasing characteristics have furnished unfailing themes and apt similes for the poet, the preacher, the philosopher, and the moralist; whilst the numerous records of its gentleness and conjugal devotion are thoroughly well known to everyone, and have long since become proverbial.

Notwithstanding this

pleasing list of excellences, it must be confessed that at times the deportment of the Turtle Dove in captivity is subject to some considerable variations. In an aviary it frequently becomes quarrelsome and apt to bully and drive the smaller birds away from their food; and even when more than a pair are kept together without any other sorts of birds violent quarrels will take place between them, and the weaker bird is often subjected to harsh and unneighbourly treatment.

Owing to the fact that the Turtle Dove is more generally kept in confinement than any other member of the large family to which it belongs, it is much better known as a domestic pet than as a Familiar Wild Bird. Indeed, as a wild bird it is not so frequently seen or so commonly known as may be imagined. Turtle Doves are of entirely migratory habits, travelling to us from the African Continent, and also visiting many of the European countries. They make their appearance with us about the beginning of May, although the forwardness or otherwise of the spring affects their movements to a great extent, and some remain in this country until the end of September. In the order of their migration the males usually precede the females.

The food consists of the various sorts of grain, peas (to which they are extremely partial), and seeds of all descriptions. They invariably feed upon the ground, and are constant visitors to large open tracts of freshly-sown land. Cornfields that border upon small or large streams are very favourite haunts, the birds being fond of drinking and bathing. They usually feed and go about in small flocks varying in numbers from half a dozen up to twenty or more, and at the close of the day's foraging they retire to

roost amongst the higher branches of trees. The flight is easy, buoyant, and rapid.

On their first appearance they do not seem to be particularly shy, but as the nesting operations proceed they become much more cautious, and are then approached with difficulty. The nest is a rather slovenly structure. It is composed of twigs and sticks carelessly put together in a tree, and not very far removed from the ground, seldom more than fifteen or twenty feet, and sometimes not more than four feet. The eggs are pure white, and of a very shiny, polished appearance. They never exceed two in number, and are of a long oval shape, with slightly pointed extremities. At times the eggs may be plainly seen through the bottom of the nest, so little is the trouble bestowed by the birds in the construction of their home.

The Turtle Dove is nearly thirteen inches in length, the bill dark greyish-black, much flattened in the centre, and reddish on the inside; iris bright yellowish-red, the bare space around it light red; sides of the head yellowish, changing to pink on the neck and breast; back of neck and crown light greyish-blue; on the sides of the neck there is a rounded patch of black, each feather being tipped with white and surrounded with a bluish tinge; in front it is a delicate light purplish red, fading into grey; chin pale brown; back greyish-brown above, and brownish on the lower part. The tail is long and much rounded; it is greyish-brown, many of the feathers being tipped with white. The wings are brownish- and greyish-brown, with markings of black in the centre of the feathers; the under wing-coverts are grey, and the under tail-coverts white. The legs and toes are red, and the claws blackish-brown.

The female is of a rather lighter appearance than her mate, and as a rule not quite so large, but the sex is difficult to distinguish. The young birds are at first covered with a soft yellowish down, and the full plumage is only gradually obtained, not completely until their second year.

The note of the Turtle Dove closely resembles the syllables "Tur-tur" repeated more or less rapidly—a circumstance to which its name may be no doubt attributed.

KINGFISHER
(⅔ Scale.)

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THE KINGFISHER.

Alcedo ispida.

WITHOUT doubt this is the most brilliantly beautiful of all British birds; in fact, it can vie in the brilliancy of its plumage with most of the much-admired, highly-coloured, but generally songless foreign birds. It seems to be a peculiarity of the bird-world that the song deteriorates in proportion to the beauty of the plumage; for although the Kingfisher is our most orientally-coloured bird, its song is nothing to speak of.

Yet those who have seen it skimming the river, flying along like a streak of coloured light, under the archways of rivers and streams, with a rapid, straight flight, can well understand the reason of its being classified among the "Halcyonidæ."

Many have been the notices from poets of this beautifully-plumaged bird, Shakespeare having many references to the "Halcyon"; more especially as these birds were not only imagined to be able to determine the weather, but in case of storm or tempest were supposed to have a quelling influence over them. We are afraid it is *vice versâ*, and that (as with King Canute) the flooded river would not heed the Kingfisher, but would, doubtless, wreck the Kingfisher's nest.

The length of the Kingfisher is about seven inches. The plumage may be thus described: From the crown of the head, down the neck, and the whole of the upper part, the wings, and tail, are of a brilliant green, shading from olive to iridescent emerald and blue; from the beak across the eye is a patch of rufous, which becomes white below the ear-coverts; from the base of the beak runs a streak of the above-mentioned glossy green, which meets that upon the wing-coverts. The chin and throat are yellowish-white; the breast and under parts are rufous, deepening in colour as it proceeds towards the tail. The feet are pink and small. The tail is short; but the beak is long and straight. The plumage is much brighter during the breeding season. The female may be distinguished by her duller hues, and from the bill not being so long.

The nest has always been a source of wonder to ornithologists. It is generally placed in some hole in a bank overhanging a stream, but sometimes placed away from water; a favourite position is a hole in the bank of some river or stream which has been undermined by the action of the waters, and so affording a somewhat safer retreat from the depredations of the rats that frequent such places. The nest, too, is very peculiar. It would appear to be

composed of the bones of the fish captured by the birds. Some naturalists have said that these bones are "cast" up by the birds, and that the nest is made upon this accumulation. It is generally well hidden, and, except for the rats, the Kingfisher, being so beautiful, need fear few foes; it was, however, a favourite "sport" of some possessed of a gun, some years ago, to kill these beautiful birds; and as they fly straight they are easily marked. Yet there are few things more interesting than to watch one of them whilst fishing. Many an Oxford man has seen these birds along the Cherwell, skimming the water under Magdalen Bridge, or, having drifted noiselessly in his boat with the stream, has seen them seated upon an overhanging bough, watching the water with anxious eye until the long-wished-for prey appears. The Kingfisher then darts down, even swifter than a gull, secures its prey, and by its buoyancy regains the use of its wings, and flies off with the prize to its nest, if it be possessed of one, otherwise returning to its "post of vantage."

The general abode of the Kingfisher is near rivers, lakes, streams, brooks, ponds, and ditches, or indeed wherever food may be found. This food consists principally of small fish, such as minnows, sticklebacks, or any such-like smaller species of fish, water-beetles, and leeches. These are taken with the beak; and the object aimed at is seldom missed.

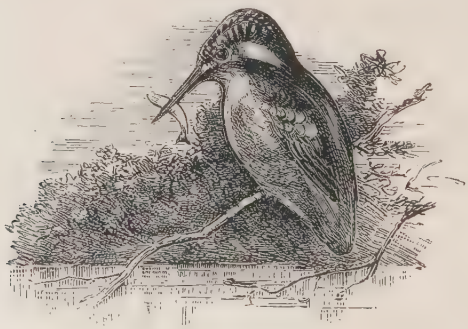
They are very pugnacious, and, consequently, lead a solitary life. Their pugnacity may be one of the reasons of their partial migration, which takes place often from one district to another; want of food, however, is doubtless the prime reason, more particularly in winter, when they have to find an unfrozen stream. They will, however, during frosts

frequent the mouths of rivers, and even as far as to the sea-shore.

The eggs of the Kingfisher are pure white, and generally from five to six in number. The plumage of the young is similar to that of the adult birds, but, of course, not so bright.

The call is but a shrill pipe, or squeal.

Kingfishers may be kept in an aviary, provided proper food is given, putting birds caught young at first upon small fish, and gradually substituting fresh beef chopped small and hard-boiled egg. It is not advisable to have more than a proper pair, on account of their very pugnacious habits. It is needless to say that if a little water be introduced into the aviary, and small fish be given, it is possible to make the Kingfisher one of the most beautiful and interesting of the inhabitants.



BLACK-HEADED BUNTING.
(⅜ Scale.)

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THE BLACK-HEADED BUNTING.

Emberiza schœniculus.

THIS pretty little bird, like many other common members of the feathered tribes, rejoices in a variety of names, such as "Reed Bunting," "Water Sparrow," "Chink," "Black Bonnet," "Passerine Bunting," and "Reed Sparrow," and it is probably far better known under most or the latter of these names than by the one assigned to it by the ornithologist.

The Black-headed Bunting is common in most of the European countries, although in the northern portions of the Continent it is a summer resident only. In the British Isles the same migratory habit is observable, and the birds move "down South" about

October, retracing their journey generally about the following March or April. During the winter months they may always be met with in larger assemblages than during the milder seasons of the year.

The favourite haunts of the Black-headed Bunting are the rushy sides of slowly running streams, the reed beds in ditches and ponds, and indeed any place where water fringed with tall thickly-growing reeds, grass, or rushes can be found.

Its habits are active and sprightly; it seldom remains long in one position, but flits from stalk to stalk, clinging to reeds or rushes, which frequently bend beneath its weight almost to the surface of the water. When disturbed the birds sometimes fly to some distant bend of the stream, but more commonly settle down again quickly amongst the rushes. Some little circumspection is necessary to watch them closely, as they are inclined to be cautious and shy, and do not willingly permit a very close inspection.

The flight is strong and somewhat undulating, the bird flapping its wings several times in rapid succession; it alights abruptly, and plainly displays at such times the white markings of the tail, which is expanded and closed in a very noticeable manner. Small aquatic insects, flies, and the seeds of the various grasses and plants found in their haunts, constitute the principal articles of their diet.

The song of the Black-headed Bunting is not very striking, being nothing more than a couple of sharp notes, repeated every now and again, and usually when the bird is swaying up and down upon some reed or osier twig. Meyer describes the "song" as consisting of the syllable "sherrip" pronounced quickly, a mere chirp of two notes, the first repeated three or four times, the last single and

more sharp. It also utters a sharp twitter if compelled suddenly to take to flight.

In building the nest, dry grasses, parts of fine rushes, and dried bents of hay are used, the interior being comfortably and neatly lined with reed-down, thin stalks, moss, or hair. The nest is generally placed on or near the ground, and usually close to the water's edge, amongst coarse grass or sedges, and occasionally in the lowest parts of some convenient bush.

Four or five eggs are laid, about the early part of May, they vary in the colour of the ground tints, being sometimes a pale purplish brown, and at other times purply white, greenish, and brownish; they are prettily streaked and spotted with darker shades of the same colour.

The Black-headed Bunting, like many larger and more pretentious birds, is credited with a strong anxiety for the safety of its young, and has been known to adopt various stratagems and ruses to divert the attention of the too curious and intrusive visitor.

The length of this bird is about six inches, perhaps a little more; the bill is dusky brown, and from the base a white streak passes backwards to the white collar which surrounds the neck. The sides and top of the head are a rich velvety black, bounded by a white collar which comes down to the breast. In the fall of the year, and until the following spring, these white feathers become shaded with grey, and the black ones have brownish tips. Chin and throat black, ending in a downward point. Breast, a dull bluish-white, darker towards the sides, and streaked with brown. Back, a blackish colour, the feathers being bordered with reddish-brown, and mingled with grey. After the autumn moult all these markings become more or less

confused. The wings are blackish, with the feathers edged with brown, the longer ones being much darker. The tail, which is a little forked, is rather long and brownish-black, the outside feathers being white. Under tail-coverts are white. Legs, toes, and claws are a dusky brown. The female is smaller than the male, and differs very much from it in appearance. The head is brownish instead of black, the white collar is replaced with plumage of a dusky-brown, and the throat and breast is a dull white.

The young birds resemble the female, but the markings are duller, and the sides of the head are greyish-brown. The black parts of the head do not make their appearance in the young male birds until after the autumn moult, and the white collar increases in distinctness as the birds approach maturity.

It is a handsome addition to the aviary, and may be kept without much difficulty.

COMMON SNIPE.
(⅔ Scale.)

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THE COMMON SNIPE.

Scolopax gallinago.

THIS well-known bird, so dear to the sportsman, and so highly appreciated by the epicure and the invalid, belongs to the Grallatorial, or Wading birds, and is found pretty generally throughout Great Britain.

It has a preference for marshy and fenny districts, and breeds in the northern and southern counties of England, Ireland, Scotland and its islands. So large a number of Snipes are, however, seen in this country every winter, that it is quite clear they cannot be bred here, and probably visit us from Scandinavia, to remain with us during the winter months.

The Snipe is fond of wet meadows, brooks, ditches, and boggy or marshy places, where it finds profitable occupation in piercing the soft soil with its long and sensitive bill in pursuit of food. During very cold weather the Snipe is gregarious, but does not long remain in one spot; it frequently shifts its feeding-places, so that a

sportsman who may have excellent sport one day, may, on the day following, find the locality entirely deserted.

When undisturbed the Snipe moves slowly and easily, carrying the head erect, and occasionally moving the tail. When alarmed, the bird invariably squats until the danger has passed, or takes wing at once, never running, as is the habit of the other members of the sandpiper tribe. When wounded, it has a curious habit of jumping or fluttering up from the ground. When it takes flight its movements, for the first thirty or forty yards, are tortuous and rapid in the extreme, and then it commonly soars to a very considerable height, or flies straight off to some distant feeding-place. Another peculiarity connected with this bird is the strange humming noise it produces with its wings, and this is more noticeable when it is endeavouring to divert attention from its nest, or when choosing a mate.

This noise is generally attributed to a peculiar movement of the wings, and has been likened to the bleating of a goat; indeed, in some parts of France the Snipe is known as "Chèvre volant."

As the spring advances the Snipe gradually perfects his summer plumage, and towards the end of March, or the beginning of April, selects a spot for a nest, and endeavours, by repeated calls, to obtain a mate. These calls, or pipings, are always uttered during flight, and are accompanied by the humming noises already referred to. At the time of nesting, and until after the young are hatched, the male bird continually soars to a great height, and utters its piping cries even when it has passed beyond human observation.

The nest is usually placed in long grass by the sides

of small locks, ponds, or amongst heather; sometimes under the stump of an old alder or willow. In Norway and Sweden the bird breeds commonly in the morasses of the mountainous districts, and in the mossy bogs of the more cultivated parts. The nest, which is made with little or no trouble, is composed of leaves and stalks, and is placed on the ground. The eggs are generally four in number, rather large in proportion to the size of the bird, and sharply pointed at the smaller end. They are of an olive-white colour, spotted at the larger end with rusty brown.

The young Snipes make their appearance about the beginning or middle of July, and both parents are much attached to their brood. The young grow rapidly, and soon learn to run freely.

Snipes feed principally upon worms, aquatic insects, and the minute seeds of various water-plants. Like that of all the Scolopacinæ, the bill is extremely sensitive; it is perforated, and capable of some degree of expansion. Owing, however, to the delicate structure and organisation of the bill, the Snipe, in severe weather, suffers great hardships and privations, and rapidly becomes emaciated and poor.

The plumage of the Snipe is rich and beautifully marked. The beak is dark brown at the end, and pale reddish-brown at the base. Irides, dark brown. A dark brown streak runs from the beak to the eye, and over this streak is another streak of pale brown, which goes over the eye and ear-coverts. The upper part of the head is dark brown, with a pale streak in the centre. The back is dark brown, slightly spotted with pale brown, and there are four plainly-marked lines along the upper part of the body of dark brown feathers, margined with rich buff.

The wing-coverts are spotted with pale brown, on a ground of dull black, and tipped with white; the primaries are dull black, the secondaries being dull black, tipped with white. Upper tail-coverts barred with pale brown and dusky black; the tail-feathers are dull black with reddish-brown margins, the end of the feathers having an oval chestnut patch. The vent, belly, and breast are white, sides and flanks greyish-white, barred with dusky black; chin, brownish-white; under tail-coverts pale yellowish-brown, with greyish-black bars; legs and toes, greenish-brown.

The length of the snipe is about ten and a-half inches, beak two and three-quarter inches; but the birds vary considerably in size and weight. The female resembles the male in plumage, but is a trifle larger.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.
(½ Scale.)

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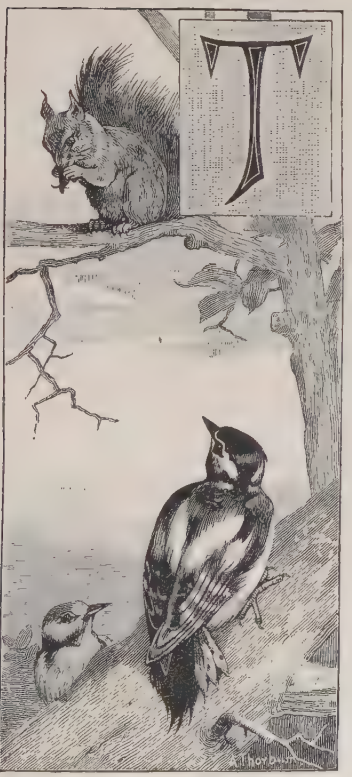
THE GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

Picus major.



THIS interesting bird, although not so frequently met with as the Green Woodpecker, can hardly be called scarce, as it is comparatively common in some parts of England, especially in the midland and southern counties. It is variously known by the local names of "Witwall," "Woodnacker," "Woodpie," "French-pie," and "Great Black and White Woodpecker."

This bird may be considered as one of the best representatives of the Scansores or climbers, and is distinguished by the bill being equal in depth and breadth. The toes are placed two in front and two behind, the nostrils are covered with bristles, and the tail is stiff and

rounded. The last-named appendage is continually used in supporting the bird when climbing and in assisting it to maintain its upright position. Like other members of this interesting family, the tongue is long, and is so arranged that it can be protruded to a considerable extent; its sides and tip are furnished with barbed filaments of a horny nature, which serve the purpose of impaling the insects upon which the creature feeds, and this process is further perfected by the copious secretion of a glutinous saliva. Indeed, the entire structure of the bird furnishes one of the most admirable examples of complete adaptability that can possibly come under the notice of the student of natural history. Moving rapidly about on the trunks and larger branches in search of food, the tapping noise so frequently alluded to by poets and describers of woodland beauties is produced by the bird when striking the bark of a tree, either to dislodge the bark, or induce any concealed insects to make themselves visible to their persevering devourer. It is partial to woods, parks, forests, and clumps of trees, where it may occasionally be seen.

The bird is shy in its disposition, and seems to have a strong antipathy to being watched, disappearing behind a trunk or bough directly it finds itself in the presence of spectators. On a still afternoon the sharp jarring sounds of the Woodpecker at work may be heard for a very considerable distance, but it is by no means easy to ascertain the precise locality whence they emanate. The note of this bird resembles the syllable "gich," and this is uttered only once at a time, and at long intervening intervals.

As may be easily imagined, the Great Spotted Woodpecker confines itself almost entirely to an insect deit, eating, with

considerable impartiality, spiders, moths, flies, beetles, grubs, caterpillars, and indeed anything and everything of a similar description. According to some naturalists, however, the bird is by no means averse to fruit.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker usually, if not invariably, inhabits holes in trees, and the eggs are deposited upon the decayed and dusty floor of the hole, with no further efforts in the direction of nest-making. Generally a hole is selected extending some couple of feet into the tree. The eggs average four or five in number, and are about an inch in length; they are white, and have a very smooth, glossy appearance. The parents are much attached to their nest and its contents, the female especially showing strong signs of anxiety and affection. The young birds are generally able to take care of themslves about the middle of July.

The flight is short and undulating; the bird is very seldom seen on the ground, and when there its movements are slow, and it generally progresses in a series of hops.

The beak of the adult is about the same length as the head, of a dark shiny horn colour, with greyish bristly feathers covering the nostrils; forehead, ear coverts, and a circle round the eye, a dull, dirty white; top of head, dark bluish black; back of head, bright scarlet; nape of neck, black—this colour passing forward in a stripe to the beak, and backward towards the wings; back, rump and tail coverts, black. The wings are black variegated with white marks, and there is a large, well-defined patch of white on the scapulars. The tail is partly black, some of the feathers being tipped and marked with white. The throat, neck, breast, and belly dirty white; vent and under tail-coverts,

red. The length of the bird is about nine and a half inches. The female has no red plumage on the head, and the young birds, although in most respects similar to the old birds, have the top of the head red, and the back part black.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker is found in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia, and thence downwards to Italy. In our own country it seldom travels far above the midland counties, although instances are recorded of its being met with in Scotland. It is considered probable that in some cases the bird is migratory.

COMMON WREN.

(¼ Scale.)

THE COMMON WREN.

Sylvia troglodytes—Pennant, Temminck.
Troglodytes europæus—Selby, Gould.

IT was some time before naturalists could assign to this popular favourite a proper position in ornithological classification, and the Wren was originally placed among the warblers; but for various reasons this bird is now placed with the Troglodytes, as having more in common with that class than with the Sylvidæ.

Equally with the Robin and Swallow, this bird has enjoyed an amount of protection almost amounting to superstition, and it is not to be wondered at that a cheery little bird like the Wren, whose whole food consists of insects, and who stays with us throughout the winter, cheering us with its merry little song, should hold a prominent position in the goodwill of all men. Some little time back, however, we are sorry to say the Wren in certain localities suffered considerably from the irrepressible schoolboy. Noticing

that Wrens naturally kept to the shelter of the hedgerows, and seldom ventured upon any lengthened flight, these boys, armed with sticks and stones, would beat on either side of the hedge until poor Jenny was killed. We hope, however, this practice is defunct. It may have arisen from the old custom of "Hunting the Wren on Christmas Day," once general in many parts of Ireland and Wales, if not also of England, when one party would carry sticks to beat the bushes, and another stones to kill the poor birds as they emerged. The origin of this curious custom is lost in obscurity. It has been ascribed to the anger felt by the Catholic Irish at a Wren saving from surprise and massacre, by tapping on a drum, a small party of worn-out Protestants. But it is singular that this same legend in Southern Ireland occasioned a ceremony in which a Wren was carried about in honour, to the accompaniment of the following ditty :—

> The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
> Was caught St. Stephen's day in the furze ;
> Although he's little, his family's great,
> Then, pray, kind gentlefolks, give him a treat.

Jenny or Kitty Wren, as it is also called, is one of our smallest birds, and yet there is scarcely one better known. This may be on account of the nursery tale of the courtship and marriage of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren ; and doubtless that same story may account for the idea which is still prevalent, that the Wren is the female of the Robin. In early spring attentive observers of Nature may see a pair of Wrens engaged most busily in the work of nest-building. This structure, which is dome-shaped, with an aperture at the side, is composed of most varied materials, principally twigs, roots, leaves, moss, and feathers, and is

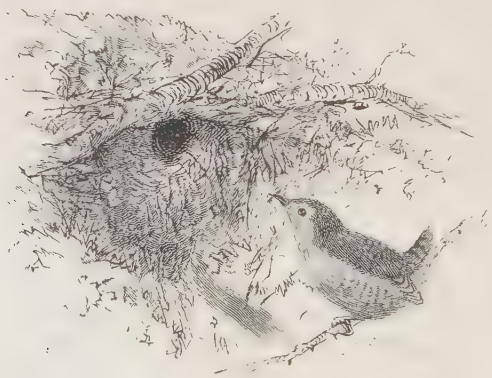
placed in equally varied positions. We have found them against the trunk of a tree, under the thatch of a building, in the forks of a cabbage run to seed, and even overhanging the variable waters of a stream; another favourite position is the aperture occasioned by the loss of a brick from an arch under a country roadway, where the grass and weeds grow around, and partially conceal the position of the nest. The position and its surroundings greatly influence the materials of which the nest is composed, as the birds labour that it may as nearly as possible resemble the appearance of its site. The Wren, although such a small bird, builds her nest of heavy material, so that it is matter for surprise how she contrives to transfer it to its place. Notwithstanding, she is extremely capricious, and will often make two or three nests before one is settled to her satisfaction; when, however, this is consummated, from six to eight white eggs, speckled with a few red spots, and about the size of a bean or large cherry-stone, are laid in the feather-lined nest, and the hen sits upon them for about ten days, being partially fed by the male bird meanwhile. The young are fed by the parent birds upon insects, flies, larvæ, and small worms, until they leave the nest and become self-supporting. The parent birds then commence a new nest, producing two broods a year.

The Wren may be found all over England and in Scotland and Ireland, whilst, as one of its classified names denotes, it is also a general inhabitant of Europe. The plumage is composed of different shades of brown, barred with darker brown, and some naturalists aver that the female is of a redder hue than the male; but the difference is very difficult to determine.

Too much praise can scarcely be awarded to the song

of the Wren. Considering the size of the bird, it is possessed of great power and sweetness, and is repeated again and again, even under most adverse circumstances. Like the Robin, this song is continued throughout winter, and even when snow is upon the ground the Wren's triumphant warble may be heard proceeding from the shelter of a neighbouring bush or hedgerow. As regards food, the Wren seems to be especially gifted with the power of self-preservation. It will pluck the spiders and larvæ from their hiding-places, catch flies and other insects that are found around puddles, especially in farm-yards, and altogether adapt itself to any circumstances.

During the winter these little birds roost in holes in houses, trees, and walls, thatch, hay-ricks, or any sheltered positions; for the sake of warmth they huddle together, and so resist the rigours of our climate.



ROBIN.
(¾ Scale.)

THE ROBIN.

Sylvia rubecula.
Erythaca rubecula.

MOST popular of all our song birds, next familiar to the Sparrow, and rivalling the latter in its confidence, the Robin holds a position in the minds of all the English race nearly amounting to superstition. And this for various reasons, inasmuch as the Robin is not only almost without reproach as a garden marauder, but is also an efficient member of that self-constituted bird police which keeps down the number of garden pests, and without whose aid the horticulturist would almost entirely fail. Then, again, the Robin has a most exquisite song! composed of strains of great tenderness and beauty, as well as sweetly-modulated execution. As this song, although somewhat lost in the general chorus of the summer songsters, is continued more or less throughout the year, and especially during

winter, when the voices of almost all other birds are hushed, the distinctive warble of the Robin comes most gratefully to the ear, particularly so to the dwellers in towns. When winter has set its icy seal upon the woods and meadows, "Bob" (as the Robin is sometimes familiarly called), despairing of food in the sylvan haunts of summer, repairs to the habitations of man, well knowing that the reward of its beautiful song will be forthcoming in the shape of crumbs, thrown out by the lovers of Nature's less gifted but beautiful creatures.

The plumage of the Robin is composed generally, upon the head, back and tail, of olive-brown, but upon the cheeks, throat, and breast it is a rich orange-red (from which its name of Redbreast is derived); this is bordered with bluish grey, terminating in white upon the under parts. The female so slightly differs that it is almost impossible to distinguish the sex, although it may be that she is less brightly coloured, and possesses eyes less full and bold. The young Robin, however, is clothed in entirely different plumage, the entire upper part being yellowish olive-brown, mottled with orange and buff, and tipped at the extremity of each feather with pale olive-brown; the chin, throat, and breast are dull reddish-brown, but this colour is materially altered by the feathers being margined with darker brown.

Perhaps no other bird has built its nest in so many erratic positions as the Robin; reason seems to have no influence over its choice. With a superfluity of admirable sites close at hand, the most ridiculous positions are often chosen; and were it not for the immunity from persecution enjoyed by the Robin, indeed we may say the protection afforded, this reckless choice of a nesting-place would

often be the occasion of sad disaster. As it is, "pussy" is the Robin's worst enemy; for even the most reckless schoolboy, or other bird-nester, has a feeling of almost religious reverence for the nest of "poor cock Robin."

Sometimes their choice falls upon a flower-pot or old kettle, at others upon a hole in a wall; but Robins generally build in a hole in a bank a nest composed of leaves, dry roots, grass, and moss, with a lining of hair, together with a few feathers, and therein the female lays from five to seven eggs of a delicate pale reddish-white freckled with darker red spots, which are sometimes gathered more thickly at the larger end, and will even form a ring, though specimens have been found of a pure white. The young are principally fed upon small worms and caterpillars, but the food of the parents also embraces other insects, such as spiders and their larvæ, together with fruit and berries. The young leave the nest in about a fortnight, and in about a similar period will provide for themselves; when the parent birds commence building a new nest, having two or three in the course of the season.

In the winter the Robin establishes himself in an inhabited district—generally in a garden adjoining a house—and will defend his supposed domain with great pugnacity, especially against one of his own tribe. They are particularly bitter against one another, and will sometimes kill the intruding foe or die themselves in defence of their haunt. These conflicts are almost invariably commenced by a vocal contest, intensified as the rivals approach, and it is then that the Robin's call, "tsit, tsit," is heard most plainly; they have also a peculiar

wail, uttered generally towards roosting-time, and of a very melancholy nature.

Formerly it was thought to be particularly unlucky to keep a caged Robin, and the accidental advent of one through the open window was, in certain parts of the country, held to be a sign of a coming "death in the family." These superstitions, with many another, are so very deep-rooted as to obtain to a great extent at the present day.

The Robin is exceedingly inquisitive, and will infallibly inspect every fresh-turned flower-bed, possibly in search of food, though anything fresh or extraordinary has a very great charm for this favourite bird.

THRUSH.
($\frac{1}{2}$ Scale.)

THE THRUSH.

Turdus musicus.

WELL distinguished as the "Song Thrush," this bird, as such a name denotes, is possessed of one of the most melodious voices to be found in the list of British song birds.

Thoroughly familiar it is, and exceedingly popular as a cage-bird; but beautifully as the Thrush will sing in confinement, it is when, in early morn, or as evening twilight advances, the Thrush has taken up a favourite position upon the withered bough of a tree, that his song is heard to the greatest perfection. Clear, yet full of mellowness—now pealing out a phrase of wild bluff heartiness, and anon with long-drawn note tinged with exquisite pathos—the song of the Thrush strikes a responsive chord in the heart of every hearer. Indeed, under the name of the Mavis and

Throstle, the bird has had a prominent position in the world of poesy from the earliest times. Its beautiful song commences early in January, and is heard throughout the whole year, with the exception of moulting time.

The Thrush is a fine, handsome bird, with pretty, though somewhat colourless, plumage. The whole upper part is olive brown, somewhat deeper coloured upon the head and neck. The throat is a yellowish-white, partially speckled with dark brown spots; the breast is pale buff, tinged more darkly on either side, and from the throat down to the thighs flecked with very dark brown triangular spots. The sexes may with difficulty be distinguished, except that the male is possibly smaller, whilst the female has larger spots upon the breast, and not so much buff. As, however, the female is mute, the song supplies an unerring guide.

Though of some size—*i.e.*, 8½ inches in length—this bird does not walk, but when upon the ground proceeds with a series of leaps or hops; the flight, however, is rapid, and capable of being sustained for a considerable distance; yet the Thrush is only a partially migratory bird, most individuals remaining with us throughout the winter. At that season, however, a considerable migration appears to arrive from the north, possibly driven south by snow or hard weather.

It is seldom that more than a pair of Thrushes are seen together, except at the period of their forced migration in winter; and even then their numbers never attain to the extent of the flocks of Fieldfares.

The general abode of these birds is in the neighbourhood of gardens, plantations, hedgerows, and thickets; yet there is little limit to their choice, sometimes living in well-watered valleys, and again among furze and thickets upon

the hill-sides, where water must perforce be somewhat scarce.

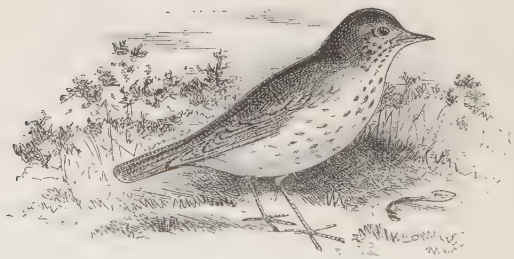
The nest is generally placed in a hedgerow or thicket, or in furze; but the position is varied, and greatly depends upon circumstances. Sometimes they are very shy in their choice of a nesting-place, and again will at times select a position which demands from them the most fearless confidence: some having placed their nest in a shrub or bush in a garden, or near a house, where it was possible for passers-by to observe their eggs or young. The nest is formed externally of small twigs, fine roots, green moss, and leaves, with a lining of mud. The eggs are generally five or six in number, of a light greenish-blue colour, speckled with black spots, especially at the larger end, where they often form a well-defined ring.

The young are fed with exemplary assiduity by the parents, chiefly upon insects, until, being able to provide for themselves, they are thrown upon their own resources by the old birds, who start building another nest.

The usual food of the Thrush is such as to make it especially valuable to the gardener and husbandman; for although in summer it may feed upon different kinds of fruit, yet its diet chiefly consists of insects, caterpillars, worms, and snails; among the latter especially may be included those that so greatly infest wall-fruit trees (notably apricots and peaches). The shell of this snail, however, is comparatively hard; and the Thrush, therefore, to obtain the dainty within, dashes the shell against a large stone in a most adroit manner, until the shell is crushed. Hence, it may be freely admitted that the few fruits purloined in summer have been well earned. In winter the Thrush feeds principally upon snails and berries.

The "call" of the bird is a short, harsh cackle; but unless disturbed, it is generally silent. The "song" of the male has already been described, and is amongst the most conspicuous of all the melodious notes which fill the air, even in the neighbourhood of large cities.

Thrushes will breed in a large aviary. If confined in a cage (which should be large and have wooden bars), the Thrush will often become tame enough to feed from the hand; it will, however, require constant cleaning, as it is very apt to scatter its food. A little fruit in summer will be a treat, as also an occasional snail.



JACKDAW.
($\frac{1}{3}$ Scale.)

THE JACKDAW.

Corvus monedula.

THIS bird is even more commonly known than the Rook, as it is generally in the neighbourhood of the dwellings of man that it takes up its abode. Like that bird it is also gregarious, and some colonies attain to considerable numbers.

The length of the Jackdaw is about fifteen inches, the female being possibly the larger; but otherwise it is very difficult to distinguish their sexes. When seen in flight the appearance of the Jackdaw seems one uniform black, but upon closer inspection it will be found to have an especially black cap upon the head, and from the ear coverts round to the back of the head a broad patch of grey. The beak, tongue, legs, and feet are black, but the eye is clear bluish-white.

These birds are to be found generally throughout Europe, and are common to almost

all parts of Great Britain. In this country they affect, as their nesting-places, the holes and crannies of ruins, towers, church-steeples, and other buildings, though often they may be found in chalk and other cliffs or deserted chalk-pits, and at other times will build in the hollows of trees or in chimney-stacks.

The nest is another instance of the wonderful amount of trouble birds will bestow upon its building; not that the Jackdaw's is an elaborate structure, but rather a chaotic arrangement of twigs as a foundation (and these almost infinite in number), upon which is laid dried grasses and straw, with an inner lining of wool (sometimes feathers), or any other soft materials.

The eggs are from four to six in number, though generally five, of a bluish-white, sometimes pale greenish-blue colour, speckled, though more profusely at the larger end, with spots of dark brown and purplish-grey. These eggs are generally deposited in the nest by the middle of May, and the young are hatched about the beginning of June. The young are fed by the parent birds until able to accompany them in their quest for food.

Of the Jackdaw it may truly be said that he is the early bird that catches the worm, for about daybreak he may be seen quitting his haunts in city or town, cliff or tree, and flying towards the neighbouring meadows, pastures, or ploughed fields, in search of food. This embraces so many objects that it is almost impossible to enumerate them. It principally feeds, however, upon worms, grubs, insects and their larvæ, sometimes grain, and, if living near the sea, upon the shell-fish and smaller crustacea cast up by the tide.

It therefore is needless to remark that the Jackdaw

is of immense assistance to the husbandman, and also to the market or other large gardener. This is especially when the young are hatched, as at that time the parent birds, emboldened by the knowledge of the extra demands cast upon them, will visit many a garden near the habitation of man in their search for food; and this, too, in spite of the fact that they are generally as wary of danger as the Rook, and make provision in the way of outposts as mentioned of that bird. About this time Jackdaws may be seen perched upon the sheep's backs, possibly robbing them of their wool, and also doing them a good turn by ridding them of parasites.

The young do not have the grey upon the head until the first moult, and it may be presumed that it becomes lighter with age; it is an undoubted fact that it becomes more silvery in spring and during summer.

The voice of the Jackdaw seems to be comprised in the word "chock," and this may have originated the prefix Jack to the generic name Daw. Some have considered the sound more like "craw," others "caw," but to our mind it is uttered, when seated upon a tower or chimney, as "chock," with a staccato ending. When in flight, however, this note is more often repeated and much more rapidly delivered; especially when a single bird has been delayed and is anxious to rejoin the rest of its comrades; at which time, too, the flight becomes somewhat of a slovenly scramble; though the ordinary flight is much quicker than that of the Rook, and the two birds may generally be so distinguished.

There are few birds that have more frequently been made pets than the Jackdaw. Possibly, from having been

accustomed to the sight of man, much of the fear inseparably connected with his presence seems to be eliminated from the mind of the Jackdaw, and if brought up from the nest (and they are very hardy), they will become exceedingly attached to their keepers. In confinement their favourite food is meat, but they are easily pleased, and in return are most amusing. The droll expression of the half-turned head and the watchful white eye is a marked characteristic; added to this, "Jack" is something of a mimic, and will even learn to talk. He has, however, the failing belonging to the rest of the tribe, and is much addicted to hiding uneatable objects, as our readers may remember is humorously pourtrayed in the Ingoldsby Legend of "The Jackdaw of Rheims."

SISKIN (PAIR).
(⅓ Scale.)

THE SISKIN.

Fringilla spinus.—LINNÆUS.
Der Zeizig.—BECHSTEIN.

IT has often been matter for surprise that this sweetly docile, pretty, and amusing little bird is not better known, though certainly its merits are fast attracting attention; and before long, if the supply of Goldfinches becomes exhausted, the Siskin may possibly supply its place as a cage-bird. Better known in London, and in some other parts of England, as the Aberdevine, it may be that the double name has mystified amateur ornithologists; but from the numbers lately imported from Germany, it is seldom that a well-constituted aviary is destitute of one of these sprightly little birds.

Since no mention of the bird appears in the Rev. Gilbert White's "History of Selborne"—and he was a most observant and true naturalist—it would

appear almost as if these little winter visitants were unknown around that district.

The plumage of the Siskin, together with its other natural advantages, gives it a very high position in the list of Finches. Its beauty is indeed beyond gainsaying, a brilliant lemon-yellow pervading its plumage throughout; and this colour is thrown into especial contrast by the deepness of the black of the head and rest of the plumage. The female is of a duller colour, and has no black on its head.

Several instances have been recorded of Siskins breeding in confinement; and it may be that the patience and perseverance of breeders may in the dim future make the Siskin a rival progenitor to the original Green Canary. The Siskin even at the present day mates freely with the Canary; and the mules produced are handsome birds, and especially sweet songsters.

This interesting little bird is probably a native of Norway and Sweden, although found breeding in certain districts of Germany. What more concerns our present readers is the fact that the Siskin has been found breeding near London, although it is extremely possible that these instances—as remarked of the Redpoll—were merely escaped birds. Yet it has been proved from the time of Yarrell that many nests existed in the pine-trees of Scotland; and an enthusiastic ornithologist of the present day, Mr. Booth, of the Dyke Road Museum, Brighton, was fortunate enough to find an unmistakeably wild nest whilst he was sojourning in Scotland.

The nest is thus described by Morris. "It is placed in trees, at only a short or moderate height from the ground, and is composed of stalks of grass and small root

and fibres, moss and lichens, lined with hair, rabbits' fur, thistle-down, wool, or a few feathers." Bechstein, however, thus :—"It prefers building in forests of pine or fir, and places its nest on the highest bough of one of those trees, or sometimes on the branch of the alder. It is fastened to the bough with spiders' web, coral moss, and threads from the cocoons of various insects, and is cleverly constructed of these materials, woven together with small twigs, and lined with very fine roots."

The eggs are of a greyish-white, spotted thickly, particularly at the larger end, with purplish-brown, and are generally five or six in number.

The migratory appearance of the Siskin in this country is somewhat erratic, and is in keeping with the mystery that enshrouds some other of the proceedings of its life. In some years a considerable migration arrives in England from the north, which would almost point to the fact that these little birds must have crossed the German Ocean ; or it may be—for their numbers so considerably vary—that these are merely the birds bred in Scotland. In other years—and this appears to be the real migration—the movement proceeds from Norway and Sweden *vid* Germany, picking up the stragglers in that country, and so to the south of England.

Bechstein observes that the male generally loses the black of the throat in the moult of the second year ; but this is not a uniform rule, as we have known many varying specimens. The birds, however, invariably increase in brilliancy and beauty of plumage with age.

The food of the Siskin whilst in Norway and Sweden seems to be the seeds of the firs and pines. In the autumn, Bechstein says they exist upon the seeds of the thistle and

burdock. In England, in October, they feed upon button-weed, and in winter and early spring subsist upon alder seeds, the small buds of various trees, and the seeds of fir cones.

The song of the Siskin generally commences with a phrase somewhat common with the Linnet, finishing with one which may be represented by "gurgle geeter jaaa." The usual note, however, is a pretty, tuneful, but jerky twitter, often marred by the harsh note "jaaa." The ordinary call, which is often repeated, is somewhat after the manner of the Redpoll, and may be described as a little more metallic "keet." When given in warning, before taking to flight, it is "chuck a chuck keet."

WRYNECK.
($\frac{4}{5}$ Scale.)

THE WRYNECK.

Yunx torquilla.

ALTHOUGH found in many parts of England, this bird is not generally known, and many who have heard its note have been at a loss to distinguish the utterer; and this for the great reason that the Wryneck is with difficulty distinguished, on account of the colour of its plumage, and, again, because its general haunts are wooded districts. It is in parks, avenues of trees, or other well-protected positions where trees are plentiful, that the Wryneck will be most usually found, but this particularly in the east and south of England. It is also, though rarely, found in Scotland, but seldom in Ireland.

The name "Wryneck" is derived from the extremely erratic movement of the neck of this bird when in a state of fright or ordinary pleasure. At such times the neck twists and

wriggles in very similar manner to a snake, and from this peculiar movement the Wryneck is known in many districts as the "snake-bird"; but this name also applies to the plumage, since this bird is arrayed in feathers somewhat resembling the common snake in colour and general arrangement.

It is a plain greyish-coloured bird, pencilled, barred, and mottled with brown in a most elegant manner, and darker upon the back and wings. The chin and throat are yellowish-white, and the breast white, all barred transversely with black. The female greatly resembles the male, though the plumage is not generally so bright.

The flight of the bird is very dull and heavy in comparison to its size. Yet it is migratory, leaving this country in September, and returning about the beginning of April, just before the cuckoo; and from this circumstance is derived its local name of "cuckoo's mate." It is also known as the "tongue bird," from the fact of its tongue being particularly long, and of a silvery appearance. This is the more noticeable when the bird is in pursuit of its food, as the organ is darted out in a most rapid manner, and withdrawn just as suddenly, seldom having missed securing the object aimed at.

The general haunt of the Wryneck is upon a sunny bank or the dead branch of a tree. Although it sometimes ascends the trunks of trees, it does not use its tail as a support, the same as the Creeper or the Woodpecker, but generally runs along the branches in search of the various insects or larvæ secreted in the bark, though the principal food consists of ants and their eggs. Even though the beak is differently constituted from that of the Woodpecker tribe, this bird appears to be the link between those

birds and the Cuckoo, having many of the attributes of both, as it is decidedly non-gregarious, being almost invariably found singly, or at most in pairs.

The nest is built in various places, inasmuch as it will sometimes be found in the deserted hole of a Woodpecker, whilst at others the bird will choose a hole in an old decayed tree, often beside a country road, though generally in a more wooded locality. This nest is composed of moss, wool, hair, and grass-stalks, laid upon a foundation of decayed wood. The eggs are eight or nine in number, but have varied from five to twelve, and are of a pure shining white. The same nesting-place is resorted to several years running, as the birds seem to become attached to their familiar haunts. The young are fed principally upon ants and their eggs, with a few caterpillars and such-like insects.

In connection with the snake-like appearance under some circumstances, especially if wounded, it may be added that the Wryneck will even hiss as it writhes and twists its neck. Indeed, so peculiarly snake-like is its appearance at such a time, that many have been deterred from taking it into the hand, so much did the bird resemble that much-abhorred reptile. The young, too, have the peculiar power of the adults, and will hiss if disturbed in the nest. These various circumstances make up one of the most singular instances of what is called "protective mimicry" in the animal world.

Although generally living in unfrequented positions, the Wryneck is not a shy bird, but if approached will show a certain amount of disregard for the observer, not flying away if disturbed, but contenting itself with simply running along the branch.

Its call is said to be varied; the general utterance of the Wryneck is one clearly-defined note delivered in succession, and which may be well represented by the phrase "Peel, peel, peel," each note repeated some eight or nine times. As before mentioned, it also hisses; and it has been remarked to have a peculiarly soft note during the nesting season.

The Wryneck is about the same size as a Lark, being about seven and a-half inches in length.

WHITETHROAT.
(⅔ Scale.)

THE WHITETHROAT.

Sylvia cinerea.
Motacilla „

THE Whitethroat is decidedly the commonest of the Warbler tribe, and may be found more or less plentifully throughout England, especially towards the south. These beautiful and elegant birds frequent gardens, thickets, hedgerows, or the outskirts of woods; and, unlike most of the Sylvia tribe, will even make a home upon the hill-sides, amidst the furze and brambles.

From a habit of frequenting, and even building, amidst nettles, this bird is known in many districts as the "Nettle-Creeper."

The Whitethroat is about 5½ inches in length; the head and neck are grey; the back, too, is grey, but tinged deeply with brown. The tail is dark brown, the feathers being edged with rust-colour, the two outer feathers, however, are greyish-white, which is most distinctly perceptible

in flight. Like the tail, the wings are dark brown, each feather being edged with a light rusty brown; the throat and belly are white; the breast, sides, and vent are very pale grey, tinted in a beautiful manner with a delicate rosy flesh-colour.

The Whitethroat is non-gregarious, for, although many pairs may be building in a neighbourhood, they do not associate, as with some birds, but keep strictly to themselves; and, indeed, it is seldom that even a pair are seen together, each seeming to have its separate walk in life.

The male birds arrive in England several days before the females, as is the case with others of the Sylvidæ, and they are generally here by the second week in April. When they have paired, they fix upon a nesting-place, which, however, is in most varied positions: sometimes in a hedgerow (even close to a road), in the furze upon the sides of hills, or waste lands; at other times in a bush in a garden; but oftener perhaps in brambles, or the bushes of the wild rose that grow among little thickets, which the hand of the modern practical farmer has left untouched.

In the security of this prickly retreat the pair of birds build a deep nest, thinly constructed of dry grass, lichens, and wool, lined with horsehair, and therein the female deposits from four to five eggs: their colour is a dirty greenish-white, spotted and speckled with green and brownish-grey.

During nesting-time especially, the male bird sings his song under varying circumstances, and consequently in varying manner. He seems at this time, however, to be somewhat pugnacious, as when singing he elevates

the feathers upon the top of the head, and so forms a crest. The song has been variously described, but to our mind it is decidedly pleasing. It consists of a pretty phrase uttered in a joyous manner, and accompanied with many odd jerks and gestures. The usual mode of delivery is whilst the bird is fluttering at a height of about twenty feet, having risen from the spray of bramble upon which it was sitting. Thus, with butterfly-like motions and jerking neck, it utters its carol, and then suddenly drops with subsiding song into the bush it had quitted so shortly before. The call-notes of the bird are very varied. At times it sounds somewhat like "hived, hived;" again, like "cha, cha;" and at other times like "purr, purr"—each note doubtless expressing some distinct phase of the singer's feeling.

The Whitethroats at certain seasons are real friends to the gardener, as their food, and that of their young, is then almost entirely insectivorous. They live principally upon caterpillars, small beetles, and winged insects, catching the latter in an adroit manner whilst upon the wing; but as summer advances the Whitethroat takes toll of currants, raspberries, strawberries, and green figs, and in autumn elderberries are the staple food.

The young do not obtain the bluish-grey upon the head until the succeeding spring, the feathers meanwhile being brown; neither have they the beautiful delicate shade of pink upon the breast until we see them again in England in the succeeding spring, upon their return migration. The autumn migration commences in September, and continues until October. Instances have occurred of their remaining later, an individual bird having been observed even in December; but this is rare.

As is the case with many other birds, if disturbed whilst sitting upon her nest, the female will often simulate being wounded, and flutter off, in the hope of attracting the intruder's attention from her nest. Therefore the nest is easily found if the hedgerow is beaten.

From the sprightliness of its nature, no less than its delicate beauty, this bird is well worthy a place in any moderate-sized aviary, especially as its pretty song—delivered, too, whilst upon the wing—is not its only attraction, for the Whitethroat will become very tame, and eat its food—especially mealworms—from the hand of its keeper. However, being a migratory bird, it will in most cases require artificial warmth, or at least that of a conservatory or sitting-room, during winter.

GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

(Scale.)

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

Sylvia regulus.
Motacilla ,,
Cristatus ,,

THIS is the smallest of European birds. It is but $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, but is exceptionally pretty. Whilst the birds are in flight or in pursuit of food it is difficult to determine the sexes, as at such times the distinguishing crest is partially closed over by the black feathers on either side; but if influenced by pleasure or other excitement, the crest is expanded, covering the whole of the head, and upon inspection, it will be found that the male has a broad orange (the female, lemon) streak from the forehead over the crown of the head. The whole of the upper part of the body is olive-green, but lighter towards the tail-coverts; the under part is greyish-white, shaded—especially on the cheeks, throat, breast, and flanks

—with buff. The wings and tail are olive-green, but the flight-feathers are edged with yellowish-white, and prettily barred with white, which is very perceptible in flight.

Although so diminutive, the Gold-crest is to be found in countries where the climate would appear to be altogether prohibitory to so small a bird; but the poor little creature seems somehow to exist, even amid the snow and frost-bound wastes of Siberia, and positively revels amidst the pine-clad hills and mountains of Norway and Sweden; indeed, the race would appear particularly to affect the north, and it is chiefly in such countries that these birds build and make their homes.

Though their powers of flight are necessarily restricted, the Gold-crest is a partially migratory bird, for although many stay in England throughout the winter, yet a number leave us. Another peculiar migration occurs in October, when these birds visit gardens in the south in such considerable numbers, that in 1882, in a garden at Brighton, a boy killed with a catapult as many as twenty birds in one day. At these times, in spite of their gregarious habits, they are continually fighting one another.

Although their diminutive size often enables them to evade observation, the Gold-crest is not a shy bird, but will allow an observer to approach within a few yards; indeed, it would seem as if fear in a bird's mind increased in direct proportion to its size. Gales seem to have a great effect upon this pretty little bird, and it is more generally seen immediately after one of those disturbances of nature. Indeed, it would appear that wind has a much more distressing influence upon these birds than even frost or snow.

The usual song of the Gold-crest is weak, but very pleasing, and much resembles that of the Common Wren. Its call is a shrill but weak note, most nearly represented by "tsit, tsit."

Their muscular powers appear to be weak, as they seldom hop from place to place without calling in the assistance of the wings, which they seem to be always flapping whilst in pursuit of their food, for they flutter around and underneath the leaves, and pick off the insects that may have taken refuge there. They are most indefatigable in their search, calling to one another meanwhile, and so searching branch after branch, ridding them of any small insects that may be found, but especially small winged insects—or, according to the season, their larvæ—for it is upon such food that the Gold-crest feeds.

This bird breeds early—usually during March—building its nest generally in a fir-tree, but sometimes in yews, or even in a laurustinus. The nest is dome-shaped, with a small aperture at the side, and not built upon the branches, but suspended therefrom, and at various heights from the ground, sometimes but five feet, varying to ten feet. The nest is built chiefly of green moss, lichens, caterpillars' cocoons, and the down of the flowering willow; this structure is lined with feathers, but the exterior much resembles in appearance the branch upon which it is suspended. Observant dwellers in the country may have often noticed these nests, apparently deserted and unfinished. The reason is that, like the Common Wren, this diminutive bird makes various efforts in the way of nest-building before an edifice or its site gives satisfaction; but when such is finally the case, the female deposits therein a various number of tiny eggs—though

large for the size of the bird—usually eight or nine, of a pale flesh-colour, but so thickly spotted with reddish-brown as to comparatively alter the ground-colour. These spots, as a rule, form a ring at the larger end. The young are fed similarly to the parent birds, who are most earnest and painstaking in their endeavours to supply their callow brood with food.

The young resemble the adult birds in general plumage, but are not so bright, and no yellow appears upon the head until after the first moult.

The Golden-crested Wren may be kept in the aviary, but with great difficulty, as the food necessitates constant attention; whilst their size is such, that the slightest mishap occasions death. One or two cases are, however, known in which the bird has been bred and reared in captivity.

JAY.
($\frac{3}{5}$ Scale.)

THE JAY.

Corvus glandarius—Pennant, Bewick.
Garrulus glandarius—Selby, Gould.

FEW birds have obtained such unenviable notoriety as the Jay. Equally with the Magpie abhorred by the husbandman, farmer, and gamekeeper, the Jay, in the reign of George II., was considered such a desperate character, that an Act of Parliament was passed empowering certain authorities to pay a reward of threepence per head for every slaughtered bird. Doubtless this had the effect of lessening the number, for although the Jay is still common to almost all parts of England, it is not what may be termed plentiful. This, too, is because, like most of the tribe, Jays show a preference to certain localities, though without any apparent reason, as the regions they affect are generally low waste lands, without the means of subsistence that a neighbouring fertile locality would

obviously afford. This peculiarity is more noticeable in the Jay, inasmuch as its food is of a more vegetable character than the rest of the decidedly pronounced Corvidæ family.

The home of the Jay is generally pitched in woods, or in plantations known locally as copses, shaws, or spinneys, and from these vantage-grounds this bird lays all the surrounding country under tribute. The food includes, besides insects and worms, the eggs and young of small birds, fruit, such as cherries, peas, and such like vegetables, anything in the shape of corn or grain: indeed, keepers of preserves have to be especially watchful to see that the Indian corn and other food placed for the game is not eaten by the Jays in the neighbourhood.

Doubtless the Jay has his good qualities, and possibly, did he not eat the insects they would demolish more than he does; but the gun of the gamekeeper and trap of the husbandman are still as much directed against the Jay as against the Magpie.

Unlike that bird, the Jay builds an open nest without the dome-like protection, and much resembling a very large Blackbird's nest. The structure is generally hidden amongst the leaves in a thick tree or bush, and composed externally of short sticks and twigs, lined with fine roots and grasses. The eggs are usually five or six in number, of a yellowish-white ground colour, though this colour is somewhat obscured by a multitude of greenish-brown spots, that materially alters the general appearance of the egg, which is also streaked with several lines of black around the larger end.

Jays have usually but one nest in the year, and, like Magpies, the young birds congregate around the district in

which the nest is situated, and from this rendezvous start upon their depredating expeditions.

Even if the small birds (whose unceasing clamour invariably proclaims the arrival of a Jay or Jays in their vicinity) do not make the fact of their presence known, the notorious garrulity of the Jay would attract the attention of the most stolid passer-by. Indeed, gamekeepers often find Jays to be useful detectives, since their continuous chattering is known to determine the presence of some adverse power in the wood wherein they wished to be sole depredators. Therefore the Jay earns universal dislike, for even the poacher knows this bird's proclivities to be so apt to betray his presence, as to completely neutralize the silence of his well-trained lurcher.

When taken young, the Jay makes a nice pet, for his plumage is more beautiful than that of any of his genus. Even the Magpie cannot vie with the Jay in delicacy of colouring or effective contrast. The crest upon the head of this bird is a striking characteristic, as the feathers, which are greyish-white, have a streak of black along the shaft, whilst the ends are tinged with purplish-red, and these, being elongated, can be elevated at will, and may denote either pleasure or fear. From the base of either lower mandible is a broad streak of black, giving the appearance of a moustache. The wing is exceptionally beautiful, as may be presumed from the plate, which nothing over-rates reality. The white feathers upon the lower part of the back are particularly noticeable in flight, which is dull and heavy.

The note of the Jay is far from pleasing, being a rapidly-delivered harsh sort of chatter. Some naturalists have made mention of its song, but say it cannot be heard

at any distance. The bird, however, may with patience be taught to talk in almost equal degree with the Magpie, and somewhat in advance of the Starling. Its powers of mimicry are unusually great, as it will imitate extraordinary sounds very readily, and seems to take a pleasure in doing so. It is singular that, like a great many other birds with these peculiarities, the Jay is naturally inquisitive and somewhat mischievous, and should therefore be carefully watched.

It is almost impossible to distinguish the difference between male and female, their plumage being the same; possibly, as with most of this family, the female may be the larger, but that is at best but a difficult test. In the sunlight the plumage glistens and appears particularly resplendent.

GREEN WOODPECKER.

(½ Scale.)

THE GREEN WOODPECKER.

Picus viridis.

LARGEST of the tribe, this bird is also extremely handsome, few British birds being able to rival the gorgeous colour of its plumage. Although green is the prevailing tint, yet that colour shades off to yellow towards the upper part of the tail. Upon the top of the head is a brilliant crimson, the feathers being black, tipped with red, forming a slight pencilling. These feathers sometimes assume the form of a partial crest. From the base of the beak to the back of the eye is black, and down each side of the throat, forming a kind of moustache, runs a crimson streak, bordered with black. The outer wing-feathers are barred with greyish-black and squares of buff. The hen may be distinguished from the male by the fact that she does not possess the crimson

moustache. The ordinary length of the bird is about thirteen inches. It naturally prefers parks and old timbered woods, as such places afford the most plentiful supply of food.

It is known by a variety of names, most of which, however, are entirely local. Amongst others, it is perhaps most generally known as the Popinjay and Awl Bird; yet it is also known by the names of "Rain" bird and "Tongue" bird, whilst in the south it is commonly termed the "Yaffle," or "Gally" bird. It is found throughout England, and also upon the Continent.

The flight of the Woodpecker is undulating, and yet somewhat heavy; usually only extended from tree to tree. It will alight at the base and ascend the trunk spirally, clinging with its feet to the bark, and supporting itself with its tail, searching the bark and leaves for insects meanwhile. The descent of the tree is accomplished in a backward manner. The tail, which is especially strong and wiry, is used both in the ascent and descent.

In order to obtain the insects secreted in the crevices of the bark, the Woodpecker is provided with a most wonderful tongue, some inches in length, very prehensile, of a silvery appearance. When in search of food, this organ is protruded with marvellous celerity, and, being covered with a glutinous substance, it invariably secures the object aimed at; it is then as quickly withdrawn, with the food adhering.

The beak is wedge-shaped, long and strong, and used by the bird to tap at the bark in order to induce the insects to emerge from their retreat. The eye is clear and white.

The Woodpecker can hardly be said to build a nest, and yet it takes an immense amount of trouble in preparing a site wherein to deposit the eggs. This is in a hole made by the birds by continuous chipping with their beaks in an old tree, and the chips of wood broken off by the birds in the operation are said to be carried some distance, in order that the hole may escape detection. The entrance is small, but a larger cavity is scooped out in the tree, and upon some of the dry chips of wood the eggs are deposited. These are usually from five to six in number, pure white in colour, and so transparent that the yolk is visible.

The young are fed upon the same insect food as the adults. They will leave the nest before they can fly, and run upon the branches of the tree.

The young are not so brilliantly arrayed as the adult birds, and the crimson of the moustache and upon the head is much fainter. The black, too, is marred by feathers tinged with greyish-white, whilst the breast from the chin is much lighter, and the green generally not so bright; the plumage having somewhat of a speckled appearance.

The Green Woodpecker can be found in England throughout the year, generally singly or in pairs; for it is strictly non-gregarious, and pursues its avocation in a quiet manner, except for the noise made by the beak tapping upon the bark. Yet, as many of our readers may remember, the Woodpecker is possessed of one of the most peculiar songs to be found; indeed, it is generally spoken of as a "laugh," and is very variously interpreted. Morris speaks of it as "glou, glou, glou, gluck!" but to our ears it sounds more like "yaffa, yaffa, yaffle!" which

may account for its southern name of "Yaffle." This song is uttered in an abrupt manner, and, when heard in the quiet seclusion of a park, surrounded by noble old "monarchs of the wood," it has a peculiarly startling effect.

The feet of the Woodpecker are especially adapted to climbing; they are strong, dark-coloured, and the toes are roughened beneath, whilst the claws are strong and much hooked. The arrangement of the toes is also peculiar, as there are two in front and two behind.

If obtained when young, this bird will live well in an aviary or large cage. It is perhaps not advisable to place it in an ordinary aviary, as its size and habits may frighten the smaller birds. If a separate one, or one inhabited by Tits or a Nuthatch, be available, the peculiar habits, song or "laugh," and the peculiar tongue—which has the appearance of a streak of white silk or molten silver—of the Woodpecker, will amply repay all trouble.

GREENFINCH.
($\frac{2}{3}$ Scale.)

THE GREENFINCH.

Coccothraustes chloris.
Fringilla chloris.

THE Greenfinch is perhaps the least interesting of the Finch tribe, if it be possible to imagine any of the family less interesting than another; but it is only necessary to watch this bird in its natural condition, to observe very many instances of that inscrutable instinct which teaches all living nature its own particular work in the economy of life.

Handsome in plumage the Greenfinch would be, did not a certain sober-coloured grey so much predominate. In form the bird is somewhat heavy, from which circumstance it is known in some districts by the sobriquet of "Green Chub." It is also known as the "Green Linnet," though totally dissimilar from the sprightly Linnet, both in form and plumage. Its flight is varied according to

the season: in the spring the male flies with a motion somewhat similar to that of the Swallow, and utters its song in the fulness of its heart whilst upon the wing; but when the exuberance of summer has subsided its flight becomes modified, and though still quick and strong, is quite straight, with a very rapid movement of the wings. When collected in flocks, the birds fly closely together, and make a splendid chance shot for the embryo sportsman. They are also easily caught in a net or trap, the gullibility of a Greenfinch being remarkable; perhaps their habit of congregating together makes the attraction of a brace, or call-bird, doubly enticing.

The hen is somewhat similar in appearance to the male bird, but is shorn of the glory of the brilliant yellow that forms his chief attraction, a dull, greenish, leaden grey being the prevailing colour of her plumage.

Greenfinches generally build their nest in high and thick hedges, but are very easily pleased with a building site, often choosing bushes, especially elder or evergreens, and sometimes the small lower branches of a tree. The nest is somewhat loose as regards the exterior, which is composed of twigs and a lot of moss; but they study the comfort of the interior more narrowly, lining it softly with wool, feathers, and horsehair. The eggs are generally five or six in number, though as many as seven have been known. In about fourteen days the young are hatched, and are fed by the parent birds until old enough to leave the nest. Their appearance at this time is very different, being greenish-grey upon the upper parts, and with this colour as a groundwork, streaked with dark brown upon the back, breast, and throat. Their mouths are of a dark crimson inside when in the nest, and are always open

for food. A pair of birds will build as many as three or four nests in a year.

The young, upon becoming full-fledged, will all fly out of the nest together at the slightest imminent danger; as many a schoolboy may remember, when, after watching a nest with exemplary patience, he finds his treasure escape him just when he had made up his mind to possess it. The parent birds, when disturbed upon the nest, do not fly far away, but continue around, uttering most melancholy lamentations. The exceedingly plaintive tone of their long "tway" is enough to strike remorse into the heart of the most inveterate bird-nester.

The song of the Greenfinch is better than generally imagined, though differing in individuals, consisting as it does of only a few notes; but these are somewhat full and rich, though slightly marred by a few harsh notes that are occasionally interspersed.

Greenfinches feed upon almost all kinds of grain and seeds, especially dandelion, of which they are very fond, not even despising those growing by the country roadsides, where indeed they are generally plentiful; groundsel, chickweed, and sowthistle also help to swell the bill of fare, and in the spring-time the sweet young buds and the gardener's radish and cabbage seeds have to suffer. In winter, when all these dainties have disappeared, the Greenfinch makes shift with hips and haws, and will visit farm-yards and rick-yards and haystacks in search of food.

Towards the end of autumn Greenfinches congregate together, and when the migratory season is at hand appear in large flocks. But the bird is only partially migratory; and whilst many seek a more congenial climate, a very large number remain in England the whole of the winter.

During the winter these birds will often admit strangers of the same class into their flock, and many a stray Chaffinch or Linnet may be observed feeding with them. When alarmed, they all rise and hurry off to the nearest tree. A stray one amidst a flock of Linnets may always be so traced, as the Linnets remain in the open, while the Greenfinch rushes off to shelter.

The Greenfinch is, perhaps, the commonest of the Finch tribe, the Sparrow alone excepted, and is to be found throughout the whole of the cultivated portions of Great Britain, and is well known in Ireland. The length and breadth of Europe is laid under contribution, and along the Levant and in Asia Minor it is plentiful.

REDSTART.
($\frac{2}{3}$ Scale.)

THE REDSTART.

Phœnicura ruticilla.
Sylvia phœnicurus.

ALTHOUGH one of the handsomest of English song birds, the Redstart is but little known by name, except to ornithologists—and this, too, in spite of the fact that it is not uncommon, especially in certain localities, where, however, when noticed, it is generally denominated by the name of "Firetail." This sobriquet is derived from the peculiar manner in which it shakes its tail, which is totally different from the steady up-and-down manner peculiar to the Wagtails and various "Chats." When disturbed, the Redstart does not fly far, unless danger be imminent, but contents itself with a short flight of from twenty to thirty yards, settling upon an outer branch; and there it calmly sits, and shakes its tail whilst reconnoitring. Many

persons, doubtless, when walking along a quiet roadside or near a coppice, may have noticed the peculiar tactics of this almost Orientally-coloured bird, and at the same time wondered as to its name and nationality.

The plumage of the Redstart is subject to variety, according to the season. That in summer is very striking: the beak is black, except at the corners, which are yellow, as is also the inside; from the base of the beak towards the eye, and the chin, throat, and upper part of the breast, it is black, the feathers being generally slightly edged with grey. The forehead is white; the wings are brown, the outer edges of the feathers rather lighter; the lower part of the breast, the sides, and rump are bright rusty red, the belly much lighter, shading below to rusty yellow; the neck and back are leaden-grey, slightly tinged with red; the tail is rusty red, with two brown feathers in the centre. In winter, the adult males, as also the young males of the year after their autumnal moult, are not possessed of the white forehead, the feathers being then edged with brown; the chin, throat, and breast are tipped with whitish-grey, and the upper part of the body becomes pale reddish-brown, tinged with the grey. The length of the Redstart is about $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

The female is much less handsome, and is also a trifle smaller, than the male. An uniform greyish-brown pervades the upper part; the chin and throat are dusky-white; the breast is dirty rust colour; the wings are lighter, but the tail is not quite so bright.

Its haunts are very varied in their nature, sometimes being a most retired and sequestered spot, or thickets and hedgerows, and again even near to dwelling-houses. The nest is placed in a hole in a tree or wall, or amongst the loose

stones of a fallen wall, or in a nook behind a tree growing against a house. This nest is loosely constructed of roots and grasses, with a few feathers and hairs. The eggs, which much resemble those of the Hedge Sparrow, though lighter, are apple-green in colour, and vary in number from five to seven.

The young birds, as soon as the wing and tail feathers attain any size, do not continue in the nest throughout the day, but may be seen perched upon the branches of a neighbouring bush or tree, whilst the parents are busily feeding them.

The food of the Redstart is almost entirely insectivorous, and consists chiefly of ants and their eggs, flies, moths, spiders, caterpillars, worms, and beetles. As with Flycatchers, they pursue flies and moths upon the wing as well as when feeding upon the ground. The young are fed upon a similar diet.

As before mentioned, these birds are migratory, and begin to arrive in this country about the beginning of April; and they are more generally to be observed, especially in the hedgerows, at this time, than when, later on, they are absorbed in the duties of incubation. They retire to the Continent in September, though isolated cases have happened when a bird has been observed later.

The song of the Redstart is very pretty, although composed of but few notes—indeed, somewhat similar to that of the Whitethroat; unlike that bird, however, its manner of delivery is very different, as the song is generally uttered whilst sitting upon a tree. It is continued, with intermissions, from morning until evening. Its call-notes are varied. Morris likens one to "chippoo," whilst McGillivray describes another as "oichit."

This bird may be kept in a cage or aviary, where its handsome appearance will immediately attract attention. Redstarts are, however, very delicate, and require artificial heat in winter, and will seldom thrive unless meat be given and a plentiful supply of meal-worms. They have been reported to have learnt to whistle a tune, Mr. Sweet mentioning one so gifted. They will, even in a state of nature, imitate the songs of other birds, such as the Robin, Lesser Whitethroat, Chaffinch, Garden Warbler, and even the chirping of the Sparrow; and were they more hardy and susceptible of aviary domestication, there is no doubt that their powers of song could be considerably developed, as in the case of the Canary.

SMEW.
(¼ Scale.)

THE SMEW.

Mergus albellus.

THE Smew, or, as it is frequently called, the Smee, is a bird of handsome appearance, the plumage consisting of striking contrasts, and the head ornamented with a plume. It is about the size of the Wigeon.

Smews are winter visitors only, and their numbers vary very considerably. In some winters they are scarce in the extreme, whilst in others they are met with in comparative frequency. Under all circumstances, however, the specimens most commonly procurable are the females and young males, and the latter are generally known as "Red Headed Smews."

In addition to the sea-coast these birds resort to most of the slow muddy rivers,

inland lakes, fens, and indeed any large sheet of fresh water.

The eastern coasts of our own country are the parts most usually resorted to; in Germany and Holland the bird is well known, and it is said to be found in France, Switzerland, Provence, and Italy. It has not yet been observed in the Arctic portions of North America, and only very rarely in the United States.

Crustacea, aquatic insects of every description, and the smaller kinds of fish, are the principal items of their diet, and are procured largely by diving.

The Smew is certainly the most accomplished diver and swimmer of its tribe. It seems to be as much at home beneath the water as upon the surface—indeed, the rapidity and ease with which fish are pursued and captured are almost incredible. On *terra firma* its method of progression is slow, awkward, and ungainly: a state of things immediately attributable to the position of the legs, which are placed very near the end of the body. The flight is strong and straight, and the birds are noted for the long distances over which their journeys occasionally extend. Whilst engaged in feeding, and indeed at all times, the Smew is a shy, cautious, and vigilant bird, difficult of approach, and always warily looking out for danger.

In the winter the birds are gregarious, and are met with in small flocks, feeding together for mutual safety.

In the spring of the year these birds leave our islands and proceed farther north; they breed in localities situated in high northern or north-eastern latitudes, and at this period of their life very little detailed information is obtain-

able about them. The eggs, which closely resemble those of the Wigeon, are of a creamy-whitish colour, finely grained, and slightly glossy—seven or eight are usually laid.

In the adult male the bill is one inch and a half in length, of a bluish-lead colour, and the nail horny and white; the upper mandible is curved at the extremity, and the edges of both mandibles are furnished with saw-like teeth which point directly backward. The irides reddish-brown; at the base of the bill on each side a black patch which just surrounds the eye; from the crown of the head and down the back of it, another dark patch elongated and tinged with green, the dark feathers mixed with others that are white, and all somewhat elongated, forming a crest; the other parts of the head, the chin, and all the neck white; the back black; the rump, upper tail coverts, and tail-feathers ash-grey; the points of the wings greyish-black, with two crescent-shaped lines of black, one before, and one behind the point of the wing; the small wing coverts and scapulars white, the latter edged with black; the great coverts and secondaries black tipped with white, forming two narrow bands of white; the primaries nearly black; tertials ash-grey merging into lead-grey; all the under surface of the body pure white; the sides under the wing and the flanks barred with narrow ash-grey lines; legs, toes, and membranes bluish and lead-grey; the hind toe has a pendant lobe or membrane attached to it. The entire length is about seventeen inches and a half.

Females are considerably smaller than the males, seldom measuring more than fourteen and a half inches. The plumage of the female is different from that of the other sex; the top of the head is reddish brown; the bands of white are

much narrower, and the rest of the markings are duller and less contrasted.

Young males for the first twelvemonth resemble the female, the white markings not making their appearance until the second autumn month.

The young females are also some time assuming their complete plumage.

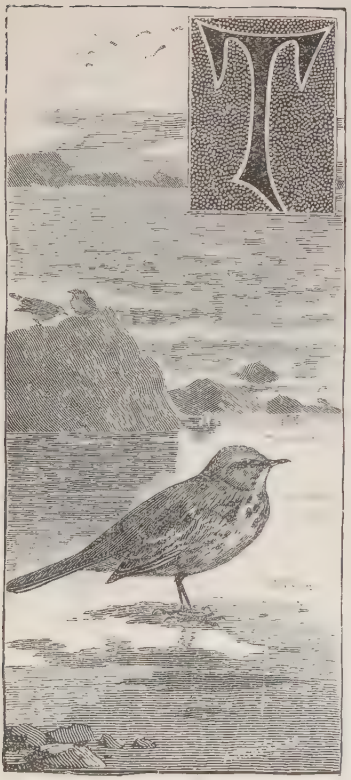
ROCK PIPIT

(¾ Scale.)

THE ROCK PIPIT.

Anthus aquaticus.

Alauda obscura.



THE Rock Pipit, or, as it is variously called, "Shore Pipit," "Rock Lark," and "Sea Titling," although possessing a general similarity to the Tree Pipit and Meadow Pipit, is somewhat larger and much darker on the throat and breast, whilst its plumage on the upper portions of the body is more of an olive brown.

This bird is well known in all the northern parts of Europe, as well as the more temperate parts, and it may even be met with in Greenland and some other districts of the Polar regions. It is a thoroughly hardy bird, and is additionally interesting from its being, as Morris describes it, "one of our true '*ab origine*' birds."

Its name is no doubt owing to the partiality evinced by it for rocky and hilly places, but it by no means confines itself to these localities, and is very frequently to be met with in spots of quite a different character. It would seem to be especially partial to low, flat, shingly or marshy flats that are now and then covered by the sea; and in these place the bird may be commonly observed diligently seeking for the small marine insects which form a favourite item in its diet.

The Rock Pipit is generally to be found in the immediate vicinity of several more of its own species, although they do not congregate in flocks. When disturbed it seldom flies to any great distance, but contents itself with a short flitting to a more secure spot in the immediate neighbourhood, uttering an uneasy "cheep" of alarm and distrust.

Its food consists of marine insects, worms, and probably some sorts of seeds. The song is not of a very elaborate character, and consists of the single note "cheep" repeated more or less according to circumstances. In the summer time the bird undoubtedly indulges occasionally in a more prolonged effort at harmony, but not sufficiently to warrant the title of songster; there is, however, a cheeriness in his voice that is always acceptable.

The Rock Pipit commences nesting usually about the end of April or the beginning of May, and as a rule selects some place close to the sea-shore. The nest is placed sometimes on the ground, and sometimes in a hole in the rocks or banks, but almost always in some place protected by some projection or eminence. Dry grass, stalks of sea or water plants, and fine fibres are used in building the nest, which in most cases is lined with wool, fine moss, or hair. The

eggs vary in number from four to six, and differ very much in appearance. They are of a pale yellowish or brownish-white, spotted with brownish-red, the markings being thick and run together at the larger end. Occasionally, however, the eggs are almost entirely brown, and at other times they may be seen of a greenish-grey colour with a streak at the thicker end. The surface of the eggs is dull and devoid of polish.

The Rock Pipit, although not a migratory bird, is certainly given to extensive movements in our own country, for the birds are regularly found in the autumn and winter on many portions of the coast, from which they as regularly disappear in the spring.

The male bird is very nearly six and three-quarter inches in length, and the female a trifle less, but there is no great difference in the plumage. The bill is dusky in colour, both upper and lower mandibles being yellowish at the base; iris, a deep brown; a narrow whitish or yellowish-white streak runs over the iris, and another beneath the hinder part; in some birds the upper streak is not always very easily seen. The base of the bill has a few short bristly feathers; the head and crown are brown, slightly tinged with olive; the neck on the sides is a greenish-white streaked with brown; and the back is pretty much the same as the head. Chin and throat a dull yellowish-white, the latter streaked with brown; breast, a dull greenish-white with brown streaks and spots, turning lower down into a yellowish-white with fewer streaks; the sides are olive-brown; the back is a dull greenish-brown, the centre of each feather being dark brown. The tail is rather long, and extends about an inch and a half beyond the closed wings; it is dusky in colour, and the outside feathers are

webbed with white, the central feathers being shorter than the others. The wings are dusky, edged with pale olive. Legs and toes, reddish-brown; claws black and curved, especially the hinder one, which is longer than the rest.

The pretty olive tinges in the plumage at some seasons of the year change to a greyish tint.

RINGDOVE

(⅓ Scale.)

THE RINGDOVE.

Columba palumbas.

THIS bird is perhaps more generally known in country districts as the Wood-pigeon, whilst it also possesses in some localities the name of Cushat, which latter name more generally applies to poetical references.

The voice of the Ringdove must have been heard by everyone in the habit of walking in the country where trees are plentiful. Sometimes, according to the tenor of the hearer's thoughts or mental condition, the soft "coo-coo, co-co-cooo" has a soothing, sometimes a melancholy influence; and we have known persons particularly irritated by the wearisome iteration. But what poetry would do without the voice and reputed faithfulness of the Dove as a rhyme to "love," only those who have never scribbled verse can tell.

The length of the Ringdove is from 17½ to 18 inches. The plumage is of a generally distributed slate-colour; upon each side of the neck is a patch of white feathers, surrounded by a ring of bright green and some purple feathers, from which circumstance its name Ringdove is derived. When in flight the white feathers upon the wing will at once determine its denomination. The sexes are difficult to distinguish.

As may be imagined from one of its names, these birds inhabit wooded districts, and are to be found throughout the British Isles and Europe generally. The nest is usually built upon the forks of trees, sometimes but from six to eight feet from the ground, yet at others from that height up to the top of the tree. They will also often build their nest in ivy. This nest is built of twigs, loosely laid upon the forked branches, and of so light and fragile a nature that the eggs and young may often be discerned from beneath. In connection with the nest of this bird, we cannot forbear from quoting a local anecdote. The Magpie was instructing the Dove in nest-building. "You place twigs thus and thus, and others thus and thus, interlacing." "Oh, I see!" said the Dove. "Go and do it, then," said the Magpie, who now has a covered nest, whereas the anticipatory Dove has but a poor framework of a foundation for a nest, which seems made simply to be blown away. How unlike, for instance, the beautiful nest of the Chaffinch or the poor little Wrens! These seem to provide against every eventuality; but the thoughtless Ringdove seems to imagine that there can be no storms, that the branches of the trees cannot move beneath the influence of the wind; and, as a consequence, the two white eggs or the young are often blown from the nest and destroyed.

The shape of the eggs, which are but two in number, is a rounded oval; and they are pure white in colour. They are esteemed by some to be delicious eating.

Two broods are usually produced in the year; but, especially if mishap has befallen either of the previous nests, they will sometimes have three. Both parents assist in the duties of incubation. The young are partially covered with yellow down, and do not obtain their full sight for about nine days. Their plumage is not so bright as that of the adult bird, having a brownish tinge; and the ring upon the neck is not obtained until after the first moult.

Although Wood-pigeons drink but seldom, they feed to repletion, and retire to digest their meal in quiet. The food consists of corn and grain, beechmast, peas, tares and vetches, acorns, and in hard times even hazel-nuts; it is therefore entirely of a vegetable nature; in fact, this is one of the few birds that totally abstain from insectivorous or carnivorous food. They also feed upon the young shoots of turnip-tops. Being of a gregarious nature, many of these birds (sometimes even in company with the domesticated pigeon) will assail a corn or other seed-sown field, and, with stately step and nodding head, speedily demolish any seeds or grain that rain or other adverse circumstances may have left exposed. At these times, however, they do not allow themselves to be taken at any disadvantage; but, as with the Rook and Starling, they place vedettes around, who give due notice of any intrusion or danger.

The minds of farmers and others are considerably exercised as to whether the Wood-pigeon, or Ringdove, repays for the corn, &c., devoured, even when the bird is in turn eaten amid all the savoury surroundings of pigeon-pie.

The ordinary flight of the Ringdove is very strong and rapid. If disturbed whilst sitting upon the nest, the bird seems to commence her flight in a blundering style, accompanied with a peculiar clapping or flapping of the wings, which may be heard at a considerable distance, especially when several commence flying simultaneously. And this peculiarity occurs even during their ordinary flight.

QUAIL

THE QUAIL.

Perdix coturnix.

Tetrao coturnix.

THIS well-known bird was formerly much more common in Great Britain than it is at the present day; indeed, less than a century ago, the Quail was regularly found in great abundance in many parts of the country where now its appearance is considered a rarity. In Ireland it is said their numbers have shown no signs of diminishing. In Scotland they have never been common. Yorkshire, Norfolk, Berkshire, Lincolnshire, Surrey, and Devonshire may be mentioned as places in which they are met with more frequently than elsewhere.

At one time the Quail was regarded purely as a summer visitor, but numerous instances are recorded of

their having been shot in this country during the winter, so that their migratory habits are certainly not universal.

In its general appearance this bird may be described as a "partridge in miniature." The male is occasionally polygamous. The note (which is confined to the male bird) is a shrill whistling cry rapidly repeated three or four times in succession.

The Quail does not spend much time or trouble in constructing a nest, but contents itself by scraping out a small hollow in the ground, and placing therein a few bits of hay, straw, dried grass, and stalks. The number of eggs laid is about ten, but nests are occasionally found containing a larger number. The colour of the eggs is yellowish-white, or greenish, blotched and speckled with brown; they measure a little more than an inch in length, and not quite an inch in breadth. Wheatfields, or patches of clover and grass, are the places usually selected for nesting in. The young birds are able to follow the old birds very soon after they are hatched, and feed upon grain, seeds, insects, and small tender leaves.

The flight of the Quail is straight and rapid. Generally the birds keep very close to the ground, and after being fired at or alarmed once, show great reluctance to take wing a second time. They are very fond of frequenting stubble-fields, and many are killed by the sportsman when in search of partridges.

The flesh of this bird is delicate in flavour, and much esteemed as an article of food. Enormous quantities are sent to this country from France, and find a ready sale in our markets and poulterers' shops, generally after a course of fattening in England.

But although the Quail is not a common bird in Great

Britain, it is found in the south of Europe in numbers that are said almost to defy calculation. In the month of April these birds arrive from Africa on the islands of the Grecian Archipelago in "countless thousands," and Yarrell states "that as many as one hundred thousand have been taken in one day on the west side of the kingdom of Naples." In these migratory flights, which are performed during the night, the males arrive first, and it is stated that amongst the large numbers sent to us annually by the French bird-dealers, and in the first lots, there are more males than females. In captivity these birds feed freely, and rather rapidly. They are particularly partial to hemp and millet seeds.

The geographical range over which the Quail is distributed is a wide one, as it is met with in Africa from the Cape of Good Hope to Egypt, India, China, and the countries of Europe as far north as Scandinavia.

Ornithologists are now agreed that the Quails mentioned in Scripture, as furnishing the children of Israel with food, are identical with the bird here described.

In the adult male the beak is brownish-grey; the irides hazel; top of the head dark brown, with a pale wood-brown streak from the base of the beak on each side over the eye and the ear-coverts, and a narrow streak of the same colour over the crown of the head to the nape of the neck; the plumage of the back, wings, rump, and tail, brown, with lighter-coloured shafts and streaks of wood-brown; wing-primaries dusky-brown, mottled with light brown; chin and throat white, bounded by two half-circular dark-brown bands descending from the ear-coverts, and with a black patch at the bottom in front; breast, pale chestnut-brown, with the shafts of the feathers straw

colour; lower part of the breast, belly, vent, and under tail-coverts, yellowish-white; the flanks streaked with pale chestnut; legs, toes, and claws, pale brown.

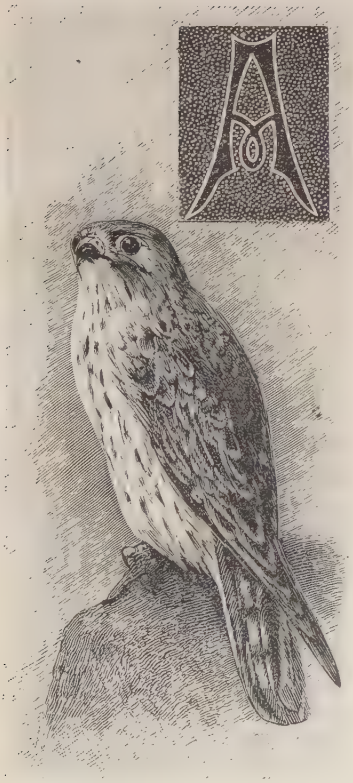
The female has no marks descending down the sides of the neck, nor the black patch in front, but the feathers on her breast are strongly marked with a small dark spot on each side of the light straw-coloured shaft.

Young birds resemble the female; the black patch on the neck of the males is not assumed until their second moult. The entire length of the full-grown Quail is seven inches.

MERLIN.
(½ Scale.)

THE MERLIN.

Falco æsalon.



ALTHOUGH the Merlin is the smallest of the British falcons proper, it possesses as much indomitable pluck as any of the larger members of the family; indeed, the freedom and audacity it evinces in attacking birds of a superior size to itself, is even a more noticeable characteristic in the Merlin than in the other falcons. In common with the Peregrine, this bird was much used in falconry, and was considered, especially in connection with partridges, to show very excellent sport indeed, striking them down with unerring accuracy. The Merlin captures its prey either on the ground or whilst flying, and will frequently select a victim from a flock of small birds, and follow it in the

most undeviating way, until the fugitive fairly succumbs from terror and exhaustion.

The Merlin is a partially migratory bird, though it is fairly distributed throughout most portions of the globe. In Great Britain it breeds in the north of England and Scotland, and is of course more commonly met with in those localities than in the south; though in the uncultivated parts of Sussex it is frequently seen. In the latter place specimens are frequently seen during migration, in the spring and autumn. It seems to be in a large degree indifferent to climate, and is said to be found sometimes as far north as the arctic circle. This bird feeds principally upon partridges, plovers, pigeons, starlings, snipes, sandpipers, blackbirds, thrushes, and any of the smaller birds; cockchafers, beetles, and other insects are also said to be sometimes eaten by it. The nest is usually placed on the ground on some heath or open moor, or in a clump of heather, and sometimes in the sides of a ravine. No great care is bestowed on the construction of its nest, a few sticks, with a little heather, grass, or moss, being generally deemed sufficient. Sometimes, however, the Merlin is said to select a tree for nesting purposes, and then the nest is made with sticks and lined with wool and moss.

Three, four, and occasionally five eggs are laid, of a bluish-white colour, blotched, particularly at the thicker ends, with deep reddish-brown or greenish-brown marks; but many varieties in the appearance of the eggs are met with.

The parent birds are very devoted to their young, and unless disturbed the female sits very closely, the male watching from some neighbouring elevation, and uttering

a shrill warning cry at the approach of danger. The flight of this handsome little falcon is rapid and graceful; it usually flies low, and skims over the open ground without any apparent effort.

The Merlin does not pursue the tactics of the larger falcons when seeking to secure a meal. It very seldom rises above its prey to swoop down upon it, but simply chases it, following every double, twist, and turn of the flying quarry with a persistency and ardour that almost invariably meets with success.

There is not the disparity between the relative sizes of the sexes when young which may be noticed in the Falconidæ generally, but the female has a trifling advantage.

The length of the Merlin seldom exceeds twelve inches; iris dark brown; forehead and sides of the head greyish-white, the latter lined with black; over the eye is a light band, margined beneath with black; neck dull yellowish-red, with a ring of reddish-brown, spotted or streaked with black; a few black streaks descend from the corners of the beak; chin and throat white or greyish-white; breast dull yellowish-red; back deep greyish-blue, growing lighter towards the tail, the feathers being streaked in the centre with black; greater and lesser wing-coverts are bluish-grey; under wing-coverts yellowish-white, or white, with dusky spots and streaks; the tail is bluish-grey, with dark bands and tipped with white; it is about five inches long; legs yellow, and feathered about one-third down; toes yellow, claws black. The plumage of the female varies from that of the male, being of a more uniform appearance; but assumes more resemblance to the male as the bird grows older. When first hatched the young are covered with a soft whitish down; after leaving the nest

they make a harsh screaming noise, especially if captured, when the parents join in the chorus with considerable vigour. When fully fledged, the young birds resemble the female most, but they are generally much lighter in colour. In confinement they soon become very tame and familiar, but seldom attain to any advanced age.

In some parts of Great Britain the Merlin is called the Stone Falcon—a name probably suggested by the habit the bird has of perching on large stones and rocks.

It is said to be commonly met with in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and other European countries.

DOTTEREL.

(½ Scale.)

THE DOTTEREL.

Charadrius morinellus.

THE Dotterel, or as it is frequently called, the Dotterel Plover, although by no means a rare bird, is not so thoroughly distributed over Great Britain as a great many others. In Dorsetshire and Devonshire its visits are of extreme rarity, whilst in Cornwall only one or two instances are recorded of its being met with. The Dotterel is a native of Europe, being found in nearly all the countries of this continent, and it is also said to be met with in Northern Asia, Persia, and Tartary. With us the Dotterel is a summer visitor only, arriving about April on our south-eastern coasts, whence it passes onwards to the high grounds of Lincolnshire, Derbyshire,

Yorkshire, Lancashire, Westmoreland, Northumberland, and various parts of Scotland. The Southdowns of Sussex are also favourite resorts of the Dotterel, and upon certain hills lying between Lewes and Brighton flocks of these birds may be met with every year with almost unfailing regularity. As feeding-places it loves the high grounds, downs, and moors, and is most commonly met with on the fallow land and newly-ploughed fields that fringe the higher parts of the downs and elevated portions of the country. The food consists of worms, grubs, slugs, and insects.

When the birds arrive at the more northerly localities above mentioned they usually frequent the fallows and heaths for about a week, and then seek the moss-covered mountains, which they select as breeding places; and they seem to favour those particular localities which are frequently obscured by the drenching rain and mists. During incubation the Dotterel is generally to be found in company with others of the same species, several pairs appearing to live together in perfect harmony. The nest is nothing more than a hole in the ground covered with vegetation, and generally near some stone or rock. Three eggs are commonly laid; they are of a yellowish-olive colour, with spots and markings of dark brownish-black, and about an inch and three-quarters in length.

During the breeding season the Dotterel is much more wary and timid than at any other time, its ordinary characteristic being what may be called downright stupidity. So indifferent are these birds to danger, that when one of their number has been shot the remainder of the flock will fly only a little distance, and soon return to their original feeding-place, even though the sportsman, gun in hand, is waiting further to reduce their numbers. An

entire flock has been secured in this way with little or no trouble.

The Dotterel runs and flies easily and with a quick active movement, and is fond of dusting itself. The note is soft and low, and has been compared to that of the common linnet, while some naturalists have likened the sounds to the words "durr," "droo." The bird belongs to the Grallatorial family, and is much esteemed as an article of delicate eating. Large numbers of them used also to be killed in the Lake districts for the sake of their wing feathers, which are highly esteemed among anglers as artificial fly-dressing.

Before leaving this country Dotterels congregate in large flocks, and remain thus together until their actual departure, which usually occurs about September; some, however, have been known to remain until October.

The beak of the Dotterel is short, nearly black; the top of the head and nape of the neck dark brown, bounded on the sides and behind by a band of white; ear-coverts, neck and back, ash colour; scapulars, wing-coverts, and tertials, ash-brown edged with buff; wing primaries ash-grey, the first with a broad white shaft; tail greyish-brown, the middle feathers tipped with dull white, and the outside feathers with broad ends of pure white, front and sides of neck ash-grey; across the breast is a band of white, margined above and below with a dark line; breast is a rich fawn colour, blending into chestnut; belly, black; vent and under tail-coverts white tinged with buff; underneath the wings are greyish-white; the legs and toes are greenish-yellow, and the claws black. The bird measures about nine and a half inches, and usually weighs about four or five ounces. In the female the plumage is not so

handsome, the markings being paler and not so distinct, and the feathers on the breast are brown.

In relation to the confiding nature of this bird, it may be remarked that its name *morinellus* literally means "a little fool," about as uncomplimentary a title, perhaps, as any bestowed upon any member of the feathered tribes. An old idea concerning the bird was that it imitated the movements of the sportsman or fowler, and Mr. Yarrell, in his description of the Dotterel, quotes a passage from Drayton to this effect:—

"The Dotterel, which we think a very dainty dish,
Whose taking makes such sport, as no man more can wish,
For as you creep, or cower, or lie, or stoop, or go,
So marking you with care, the apish bird doth do;
And acting everything, doth never mark the net,
Till he be in the snare which men for him have set."

ROCK DOVE.
(⅔ Scale.)

THE ROCK DOVE.

Columba livia.

THE Rock Dove derives its name from the character of the localities in which it principally abounds, and which are almost invariably of a rocky nature. The cliffs of the Scottish coast, and the Yorkshire cliffs of Flamborough and Speeton, may be mentioned as places where these birds may be found in great abundance, but, indeed, almost everywhere that the coast offers a secure home and shelter the Rock Dove may be said to be at home in greater or less numbers.

Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the islands of the Mediterranean, North Africa and Teneriffe are spoken of as the homes of these birds, and in Great Britain the eastern and western coasts of the more

northerly counties afford convenient retreats for one of the most widely distributed of the pigeon family.

The Rock Dove is undoubtedly the founder of the almost numberless varieties of tame pigeons with which our poultry-yards abound. In speaking of this fact, Morris observes, "If you look at each and every one of the pigeons that fly about the barn and fold-yard, or rise in a flock from the open field, or are hung up in the poulterer's shop in the narrowest streets of London, you will see that almost every individual bird, let the varied colours of its plumage be what they may, has a patch of white over the tail. This will at once show you that it must derive its origin from the species at present before us, and not, as naturally might be supposed, from the common wild pigeon of the woods."

The length of the Rock Dove is about thirteen inches; bill dullish-brown slightly tinged with yellow, much flattened about the middle. Iris, pale orange; head, crown, and back of neck, bluish-grey; sides of neck beautifully glossed with sheeny reflections of purply-red and green; chin, bluish-grey; throat, purple and green according to the light; breast and back, light bluish-grey, and white on the rump.

The wings measure twenty-five or twenty-six inches when expanded; they are of a dull bluish-grey, with two conspicuous bands of black; under wing-coverts are white. The tail is bluish-grey, tipped at the end with a band of black about an inch in depth. The legs and toes are red and scaled on the front and upper parts; claws, a brownish-black. The female is less bright in colour than the male, and the bands on wings and tail are browner, but the sexes are not easily distinguished. The feathers are very loosely set, and are easily pulled out.

In the matter of food the Rock Dove is almost a vegetarian, its diet consisting mostly of peas, oats, barley, wheat, and various other grains and seeds. It, however, exhibits a marked partiality for the most valuable crops, and the depredation committed in some localities by these birds is very serious, as they feed rapidly and continuously, and travel considerable distances in search of their favourite food. As may be imagined, the farmers and market-gardeners patronised by them regard them with great animosity, and destroy them whenever and wherever an opportunity offers. Some idea of the amount of grain consumed by them may be formed from the fact that two specimens examined by Mr. Macgillivray contained, the one over a thousand grains, and the other, five hundred and ten.

The flight is strong and rapid, and a loud cracking noise is produced by the wings. When on the ground they walk with an easy movement, nodding the head to and fro as they proceed. They feed in flocks varying in number, and when alarmed the whole party rises simultaneously with the loud flapping noise already spoken of. In leaving their homes for a foraging expedition, and in returning at evening, the flight is straightforward, and just high enough to clear any intervening obstacles.

In the winter and spring these birds assemble in prodigious flocks, and are then bolder and more easy of approach than during the summer. They roost in the holes and caves of rocks, and occasionally in old buildings or towers. Like other birds of the pigeon family, the Rock Dove is fond of water, and takes great delight in bathing, also in dusting itself. The note is a "Coo-roo-coo," the last syllable being prolonged. The nests are commonly

found in companies or colonies, in some cavern or similar retreat, where they live upon amicable terms one with another. Dry sticks and twigs with bents of hay or stalks are roughly laid together, and two eggs laid thereon ; they are smooth and white. The male is very assiduous to his mate during sitting-time, and remains close to the nest at night. When first hatched the young birds are covered with a soft yellow down. The Rock Dove seldom perches upon trees, but rests at times on some elevated and isolated spot whence a clear survey can be obtained of the immediate neighbourhood. It is generally considered that these birds pair for life; at any rate, they are extremely attached to their partners, and their grief and distress when separated is so marked as to have become proverbial.

If taken when young they soon become tame and familiar, and attain a considerable age.

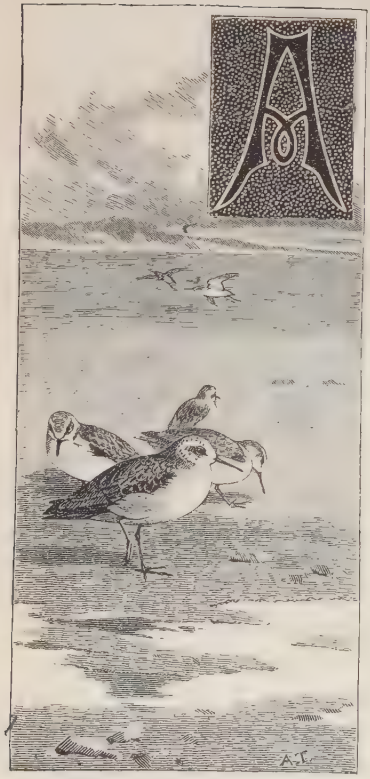
SANDERLING.

($\frac{3}{4}$ Scale.)

THE SANDERLING.

Charadrius callidris.

Callidris arenaria.



ALTHOUGH by no means a common bird, the Sanderling is tolerably well distributed over the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland; and in spring, summer, and autumn may be found upon most of our low sandy shores and tidal rivers.

It is an active sprightly bird, searching for its food either in small parties, or associated with Dunlins, Dotterels, or other birds of similar habits. But the seashore and banks of tidal rivers are not the only resorts of the Sanderling, as in the summer months it may frequently be seen many miles from the coast, on the sides of muddy ditches, or more commonly running along the edges of ponds,

lakes, and any large inland sheets of water, as with other members of the family.

In speaking of the feeding habits of this bird, a well-known ornithologist observes, "The Sanderling obtains its food principally by probing the moist sands of the seashore with its bill held in an oblique direction. At every step it inserts this instrument with surprising quickness, to a greater or less depth, according to the softness of the sand; sometimes introducing it a quarter of an inch, sometimes to the base. The holes thus made may be seen on the borders of beaches, when the tide is fast receding, in rows of twenty, thirty, or more; in certain spots less numerous: for it appears that when a place is unproductive of the food for which they are searching, they very soon take to their wings and remove to another, now and then in so hurried a manner that one might suppose they had been suddenly frightened. The contents of the stomach of those shot while thus occupied were slender sea-worms, minute shell-fish, and gravel. At other times, when they were seen following the receding waves, and wading up to the belly in the returning waters, the stomachs contained small shrimps and other crustacea." Other writers have observed it feeding on the buds of the Saxifrage.

The Sanderling runs very rapidly, and flies with ease and swiftness; when alarmed, the birds, when in flocks, generally proceed to some fresh feeding spot at no very great distance; but when disturbed in very small parties they not uncommonly take to flight and fly for some considerable distance before settling. As already stated, Sanderlings frequently associate with small companies of Dunlins, &c.; but they may be easily distinguished from their companions by the prominent lightness of their

plumage, and the continuous whistling cry uttered during flight.

The Sanderling breeds in the far north, and in much higher latitudes than any part of Great Britain. The coasts of Hudson's Bay, Greenland, and Labrador have been mentioned by naturalists as amongst the favourite breeding-places of this bird. Captain Fielden found a Sanderling's nest in the month of June, 1876, on the shores of the Frozen Ocean; this nest contained two eggs, and as the male bird was killed at the nest, it would appear that both sexes assist in the process of incubation.

The nest is placed on the ground, and is somewhat roughly built of dried grass; the eggs number about four, and are of a dusky colour, spotted with black, most of the markings being on the larger end.

Only one brood appears to be reared during the year, but this is not absolutely certain.

In summer the male Sanderling has the beak black; irides brown; feathers on the top of the head and back of the neck black in the centre, with a rufous edging; back and rump black; wings blackish, with markings of reddish-grey and greyish-white; chin, throat, sides of the neck, and upper part of the breast covered with small spots of rufous and black on a white ground; the whole under-surface of the body is pure white; tail greyish-black in centre, and the outer feathers greyish-white; legs, toes, and claws black.

In winter the bird is much lighter in appearance; the plumage of all the upper parts is a very light ash-grey, with a dark streak in the centre of each feather; the tail is ash-colour, edged with white; chin, throat, and remaining portions the same as in summer.

In spring the plumage is even prettier, the feathers on the back being all centred with black, and the front of the neck speckled.

There is not much difference in the plumage of the male and female, but the latter are somewhat larger, and in the summer lighter in colour.

The Sanderling is found in nearly all the Arctic regions, and has been met with on the Black Sea, France, Italy, Holland, South Africa, Japan, and Sunda.

LONG-TAILED TIT.

($\frac{4}{5}$ Scale.)

THE LONG-TAILED TIT.

Parus caudatus.

THE Long-tailed Tit, or, as it is very frequently called, the "Bottle Tit," as will be seen by a glance at the illustration, is diminutive in its size and peculiar in its appearance. Dr. Leach and many other naturalists have hesitated to regard this little bird as belonging to the true Tits; and Mr. Yarrell thus points out the differences that suggested the separation:—"The five species of Tits (viz., the Blue, the Crested, the Cole, the Marsh, and the Great Tit) have short tails, almost even or square at the end, the feathers being nearly of uniform length; legs, toes, and claws rather short and strong; their nests are loosely put together, gener-

ally placed in holes in walls or trees, and the birds are almost omnivorous in reference to food. The Long-tailed Tit, on the contrary, as its name implies, has the tail long and graduated; three pairs of the tail-feathers not only differing from each other in length, but all of them also shorter than the other three pairs; the legs and toes rather long and slender; the nest of the most perfect kind, oval in shape, domed at the top, with a small hole at the upper part of one side, by which access is gained to the chamber within; the nest is generally fixed in the midst of a thick bush; and the bird is more decidedly insectivorous."

This bird is found more or less frequently in all the wooded districts of this country. In the southern and western counties of England, from Sussex to Cornwall, it is common, frequenting plantations, shrubberies, and hedgerows where the trees are tall, and also gardens and orchards. The food consists almost exclusively of various insects and their larvæ, for which the birds search with considerable persistence and activity.

The nest, to which allusion has already been made, is a perfect specimen of ingenuity and care, and is in all probability the most admirable example of bird architecture to be found in this country. The writer has examined some which seemed really marvellous in their strength, comfort, and appearance; the outside is frequently adorned with scraps of bright-coloured lichen and moss, and the interior thoroughly lined with down and soft feathers. The number of eggs varies; ten or twelve are commonly laid, but occasionally even more: they are small, white, and marked with a few faint specks of red; often, however, they are plain white. During the first autumn and winter the entire family keep together. The

usual note is a sharp chirp or twitter, varied by lower and hoarser notes. At times these twitterings are very loud and shrill, and at other times so feeble as to be almost inaudible. When searching for food these little birds assume the most peculiar attitudes, often being engaged with the head downwards, their long tails giving them a somewhat grotesque appearance.

Their movements are full of sprightliness and gaiety, and well repay any watching or observation. The flight is not very strong, and is undulatory in its character.

A well-known naturalist states that he has observed these little birds, when insects on the branches were few and far between, making very persistent efforts to feed upon the gnats that were swarming in the sunshine; but he adds that they seemed to be very indifferent fly-catchers.

The Long-tailed Tit is said to be a permanent resident in Sweden, Russia, Holland, and many other European countries. It remains in Great Britain and Ireland throughout the entire year.

The beak is black; the irides hazel; the top of the head, nape, and cheeks greyish-white; over the eye, and descending thence over the ear-coverts, is a narrow black stripe (this mark is broader in the females, and said sometimes to be entirely wanting in old males); on the upper part of the back a triangular patch of black, one point of which is directed downwards; the shoulders, scapularies, and part of the rump tinged with rose-red; wing-coverts black; primaries greyish-black; tertials broadly edged with white; upper tail-coverts black; the three pairs of central tail-feathers very long and black; the next three pairs each half an inch shorter than the feather on the same side which precedes it, and all six are black on

the inner web, and white on the outer; the under surface of the body greyish-white; the sides, flanks, and under tail-coverts tinged with rose colour; legs, toes, and claws almost black. The length of the bird is about five inches and a half.

The females have more black about the head, the band on the nape and head being broader, but in other respects the plumage resembles that of the males.

In the young birds the tail-feathers are of variable lengths during growth, and the markings are less distinct and pure than in adults.

LITTLE AUK.
($\frac{1}{2}$ Scale.)

THE LITTLE AUK.

Alca alle.

Mergulus melanoleucos.

THE Little Auk, or, as it is more familiarly called, the Common Rotche, is a winter visitor only, and is seldom seen farther south than the islands of Orkney and Shetland. Occasionally, during very severe and protracted gales, these birds are compelled to forsake the open sea and take refuge on those parts of the coast where shelter and protection may be found. At these times they are shot with little difficulty. Numerous instances are recorded of the Little Auk being found on various parts of our coasts, and sometimes in large numbers; but as soon as the severity of the weather had abated the birds invariably disappeared; they have

also been picked up, dead or exhausted, in localities far distant from the sea, where they had been driven by the violence of the winds.

The Little Auk is of truly oceanic habits; in its food and general methods of life it closely resembles the Guillemots, passing its time (except at the breeding seasons) upon the sea, searching for its food, which is supposed to consist almost entirely of the smaller crustacea.

This bird breeds in the most northern of the Faroe Islands, and, according to some naturalists, in Iceland. The eggs are of a uniform pale blue colour, not dissimilar to those of the starling; the length is about one inch and seven lines, and the breadth one inch and one line. Naturalists are divided in opinion as to the number of eggs laid by the Little Auk, some saying that two are laid, and others affirming that the number never exceeds one. From the most recent observations the latter is most probably correct.

Dr. Hayes thus describes his visit to a great breeding-place of the Little Auk on the Greenland coast of Smith's Sound. The slopes on both sides of the valley were about a mile wide, and consisted of piles of loose rocks. Along these slopes the Little Auks flew in a constant stream a few feet above the stones, occasionally alighting in thousands on the rocks, under which their eggs were deposited, and in the winding narrow passages. The Esquimaux in this valley eat great numbers of these birds, which they catch in a very ingenious manner. Armed with a net attached to a long pole they conceal themselves among the rocks, and often catch half-a-dozen birds at a time by suddenly raising the net at the moment the flock is passing over their heads. Dr. Hayes saw more than

a hundred birds caught in this manner in a very short time.

In his "Memoir on the Birds of Greenland" Colonel Sabine has some interesting observations about this bird; he says, "This species was abundant in Baffin's Bay and Davis Straits; and in latitude 76° was so numerous in the channels of water separating fields of ice that many hundreds were killed daily, and the ship's company supplied with them. The whole of the birds in the breeding season, the sexes being alike, had the under part of the neck a uniform sooty-black, terminating abruptly and in an even line against the white of the belly; the young birds, which we saw in all stages from the egg, as soon as they were feathered, were marked exactly as the mature birds; but in the third week in September, when we were on our passage down the American coast, every specimen, whether old or young, was observed to be in change; and in the course of a few days the entire feathers of the throat and cheeks and of the under part of the neck had become white."

In the adult bird the beak is black; shorter than the head, and thick and broad at the base; the nostrils are partly covered with small feathers; the irides hazel, with a small white spot over the eye; the head, hind part of neck, back, wings, and tail black, but the ends of the secondaries and the sides of the tertials are margined with white; the colour of the chin, throat, and neck in front depend on the season, being black in summer and white in winter, but mottled with black and white in the spring and autumn; the under surface of the body white; legs and toes yellowish-brown, the membranes between the toes darker brown. The wings and tail are short, and the legs have a very

backward position. The Little Auk is a very small bird, being scarcely half the weight of the Puffin. There is no difference in the appearance of the sexes.

The young birds of the year, according to Temminck, may be distinguished by having the cheeks shaded with grey. When in down they are uniform sooty brownish black. The entire length is about eight inches and a half.

The Little Auk is found as far north as Nova Zembla, Spitzbergen, and Greenland.

COMMON GULL.

($\frac{1}{5}$ Scale.)

THE COMMON GULL.

Larus canus.

ALTHOUGH termed the "Common" Gull, this species is not more common than the Herring and Blackheaded Gulls, and may have been by many associated with those birds in the common appellation "Gull."

Gulls are amongst the prettiest adjuncts to a sea-side watering-place; yet many thoughtless visitors will make so-called sport in the wilful shooting of these handsome birds. But to see them flying around, or skimming the water whilst in pursuit of food, uttering their squealing cry to one another meanwhile, with possibly a shoal of fish beneath and a lovely sky above, is one of the most interesting sights to be seen at the "sea-side."

Their flight is heavy, yet

capable of very considerable extension, as these birds fly many miles whilst in pursuit of their food. This they take in an ingenious manner, almost settling upon the water in order to secure it.

When resting after a long flight, or under any other circumstances, they will sleep upon the water. Whilst swimming they seem to place ordinary waves and breakers at defiance, and though seemingly unconcerned, manage at such times to ride or fly over them.

The Common Gull frequents the whole of the coast of the British Isles, and may be found, together with the other Gulls, upon the coast of Cornwall, around Portland Bill, Beachy Head, and the other cliffs of the south coast, off Mersey Island, in Essex, around the east coast to the "Bass" Rock, along the shores of Pentland, and, indeed, more or less throughout the coasts.

But these Gulls, unlike many of their tribe,will also be found inland. They will even follow the plough, in quest of the worms and grubs turned up by it. They will also follow the course of rivers for many miles. Sometimes a flock of them may be seen in meadows or grass lands after the manner of rooks, the rear ones flying over the rest of the flock as the ground becomes thoroughly searched, until they work from one end of the field to the other. Their beautiful grey and white plumage at such times forms a remarkable contrast to the green grass, and is altogether an interesting and beautiful sight.

These birds are gregarious, living generally in such localities as afford convenient feeding-grounds and nesting-places. These latter, however, are very erratic, as they are sometimes situated in chalk and other cliffs or rocks, and again upon flat marshy grounds. The nest is built chiefly

of sticks, seaweed, and grass, and is a somewhat large one, in comparison with the size of the bird. The eggs are but two or three in number, of a dark olive-brown, blotched and spotted with black and darker brown.

The young differ materially from the aged birds, the plumage altering with age. The head and neck of the bird of the year is dull white, mottled with greyish-brown; the wings and back are brownish-ash colour, mottled by the feathers being edged with a paler brown, whilst a few bluish-grey feathers may sometimes be found upon the back; the longer feathers of the wing are brown; the tail is white, the feathers having the outer half brown; the chin and throat are white; the breast and under parts are also white, much mottled with light ash-brown. At this period they are often termed "Grey Gulls." By successive moultings, however, this plumage materially alters, the bird depicted in the plate being a partially-moulted one, showing some of the young feathers upon the shoulders, which would, however, vanish with age, until the plumage of the bird becomes a beautiful bluish-grey and white. In winter, however, the head and the sides of the neck, which are white in summer, become spotted with dusky ash-brown. In consequence of these many varieties of plumage, Common Gulls are somewhat like the coffee-plant, and may be seen at the same season in all these various featherings, for they generally feed together, their call-note (which sounds like "squeel") being the signal for them to gather, and generally to fight over the possession of any food that attracts them. Their food is principally fish and offal, or any garbage that may be found floating upon the sea. When they fly inland, which is often at a considerable height, their food is generally worms, grubs, and slugs,

and they will even feed upon grain, some that were kept with clipped wings having been induced to feed mainly upon it. When upon the marshy inland districts, however, worms and slugs are their most general food.

Their flight, though strong and capable of being sustained for an immense distance, is dull and heavy, except when they swoop down upon some object of food upon the water; their wings, however, are exceptionally long, in comparison to the size of their bodies.

If kept with clipped wings and allowed the freedom of the lawn and garden, a Gull is a "thing of beauty" which would always be attractive, and being so easily fed will not occasion any trouble; besides which, they will also become very tame.

SHORE LARK.
($\frac{3}{5}$ Scale.)

THE SHORE LARK.

Alauda alpestris.

Alauda cornuta.

IT is a very regrettable circumstance that the appearances of the Shore Lark in this country should be so few and far between, as it is an active and sprightly bird, interesting in its habits, and handsome in plumage. In Mr. Morris's well-known work on "Birds" only four instances are enumerated in which it had been met with in Great Britain, but doubtless, as with many other songsters of reputed rarity, its extreme scarceness may more properly be attributed to the laxity of ornithological observation than to actual fact.

The Shore Lark may be met with almost every year in the neighbourhood of Brighton, also about Dover, and

some parts of Norfolk; and very probably it visits several other localities with more or less regularity that have hitherto escaped the cognisance of the naturalist. But be this as it may, it cannot be denied that the bird is rarer and much more sparingly distributed than could be wished.

The Shore Lark is found in the largest numbers in North America, especially on the colder shores, and it is also said to be seen in the northern parts of Europe and Asia. According to Temminck, it breeds in Holland, and remains in that country throughout the entire year. The bird is hardy in its constitution, and although compelled by severe weather to move southward in search of milder quarters, as soon as the summer appears it immediately retraces its steps towards the cold and barren coasts of the far North.

Its migration, if it may be so called, is generally accomplished in small companies, and the birds do not undertake long journeys at a time, but straggle, as it were, from one place to another as the exigencies of the weather may necessitate.

The Shore Lark is somewhat shy in its habits, except during incubation, at which time the bird becomes bolder. After the brood is hatched it evinces great anxiety and solicitude for its offspring. The parent is said to be quite an expert in the various ruses adopted by many birds for decoying intruders from the nest, fluttering along the ground with assumed lameness, and continually uttering a low plaintive cry.

The nest is always placed upon the ground, and is not easily discovered, as the materials used in its construction are of the same colour and appearance as the surrounding ground; it is circular in shape and built of fine grass. Four

or five eggs are usually laid, which are of a greyish-white, with spots of palish-blue and brown. Mr. Audubon says that when the young birds are hatched, or rather when they are fledged, and before they are able to fly strongly, they leave the nest and follow their parents on the ground, separating when pursued, and each one endeavouring to conceal itself in the mossy herbage that surrounds their home. On these occasions the young birds make use of their wings to help them in their progress, and succeed in making themselves scarce with wonderful celerity. If pursued for any length of time the old birds follow the intruder overhead, loudly protesting against and lamenting the proceedings.

It has been already stated that the Shore Lark is said to breed in Holland, but the favourite nesting-places of this bird are to be found in the rocky sterile regions of the North, particularly where broad barren tracts of rocky land extend inland from the coast, and where moss, lichen, and scanty growths of grass are the only signs of vegetation.

The length is about seven inches; the bill is bluish, and black at the tip. The iris is dark brown; there is a yellow streak over it, and the nostrils are protected with a few bristly feathers. From the base of the bill a streak of black passes to the eye and spreads out behind it. The forehead is yellow, changing after the autumnal moult to a greenish-ash colour; on the front of the crown there is a broad black band, ending on each side with a few long pointed feathers which the bird raises and depresses at pleasure; the back of the head black; crown, greyish-brown. Back of neck greyish-brown, tinged with red; chin, throat, and sides of neck a beautiful pale yellow, white in summer; breast a pale yellow, with a collar of

black across the upper part, turning in the winter to a dusky-brown; the lower part of the breast dull white, and towards the sides reddish-brown. Wings dark-brown with markings of reddish-brown and white. Tail black, the outer feather on each side being partly white, upper tail-coverts brown; lower ones, dull white. The legs, toes, and claws are bluish-black; the hind claw is longer than the toe, and very nearly straight.

The female is not quite so large as the male. The streak over the eye is pale yellow; the band across the breast is brownish-black fringed with yellow, and the marking of the plumage generally is not so bright or well defined.

The song of the Shore Lark is variable and short, but sweet in tone, and usually uttered when the bird is flying. The bird is not at all difficult to keep in confinement, as a specimen that was caught near Brighton some time ago was placed in an aviary and lived there for more than five years.

GANNET.
(1/7 Scale.)

THE GANNET.

Pelecanus bassanus.

Sula bassana.

THE Gannet, or Soland Goose, is one of the largest birds inhabiting the coasts of Great Britain. It remains with us throughout the entire year, but shifts its locality according to the varying seasons. Enormous numbers of Gannets congregate at various well-known localities during the spring and autumn. The most noted breeding stations are Lundy Island (one spot there being known as Gannet Cove), the Skellig Isles, the Isle of Ailsa, St. Kilda, in the Outer Hebrides, Souliskerry, near the Orkneys, and the famous Bass Rock, in the Firth of Forth. At these spots, at the seasons above indicated, Gannets may be seen in thousands.

Seebohm says, "The scene is a most imposing one. Thousands of Gannets are sailing to and fro before the mighty cliffs; every part of the rocks that can support a nest is crowded with birds; birds are constantly coming to and leaving the cliffs; the harsh notes of quarrelling Gannets sound in all directions; whilst numbers are to be seen sitting quietly on the greensward on the top of the rocks, or fast asleep, with their bills and heads almost hidden amongst their dorsal plumage."

After the autumn, these birds move towards the southern parts of the coast, and are then seen, especially off the Cornish shores, in great abundance.

The Gannet feeds entirely upon fish, more especially upon those that swim near the surface of the water, such as sprats, pilchards, and herrings. The method in which it secures its food is quite different from that pursued by any other of our fish-eating birds. Mr. Couch (in his *Fauna*) observes that the Gannet, "traversing the air in all directions, as soon as it discovers the fish it rises to such a height as experience shows best calculated to carry it by a downward motion to the required depth; and then partially closing its wings, it falls perpendicularly on its prey, and rarely without success; the time between the plunge and immersion being about fifteen seconds."

The Gannet is possessed of very considerable powers of flight, and ranges over a large extent of sea in search of food, from one hundred to two hundred miles in a day being frequently traversed.

During the fishing season these birds boldly approach the fishermen, and are frequently caught by becoming entangled in the nets.

The nest of the Gannet is merely a large mass or

collection of seaweed or grass; only one egg is laid, which is about three inches in length and nearly two inches in breadth. The colour is a chalky-white, very slightly tinged with pale blue. It does not long retain its original colour, but soon becomes soiled and dirty. The young birds shortly after being hatched are covered with a white down; this grows very quickly, and gives the birds somewhat the appearance of large powder-puffs or lumps of cotton.

Gannets are very quiet and easily approached during the time of incubation; and in many places, where they are not annoyed or interfered with, will allow themselves to be approached and even handled without quitting the nest. Sometimes, however, they betray some irritation at being disturbed, and assume a threatening attitude by widely opening their beaks.

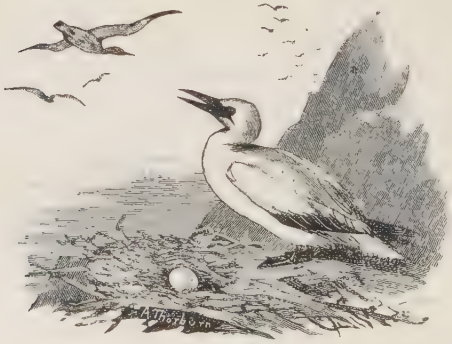
The length of this bird is about thirty-four inches; the bill is of a horny greyish-white, serrated at the edges, very large at the base, and compressed towards the point; the angle of the gape extends beyond the line of the eye; face and throat naked, the skin of the face being blue; irides pale straw colour; the head and neck buff colour; all the rest of the plumage white, except the wing primaries, which are black; the line of the bones of the legs and toes in front green, the remainder, with the membranes, nearly black. The tail is rather short and pointed, the centre feathers being the longest.

In the young Gannet the beak is almost black; the skin of the face bluish-black; the general plumage is black, varied with lines and triangular marks of white. This gives the bird a strong resemblance to the young of the Red-throated Diver.

The note of the Gannet is a harsh discordant croak, resembling the syllables *carra* often repeated, and modified in different ways, it is most usually heard during the breeding-season or when the birds are fishing or disturbed.

It is stated that the Gannet requires four years to arrive at maturity, and that until the bird has attained this age it does not breed.

They are easily kept in confinement if taken from the nest, and will become very tame, but are very expensive to keep, as the quantity of fish they consume is something enormous.



MARSH TIT.
(⅔ Scale.)

THE MARSH TIT.

Parus palustris.
Parus atricapillus.

THIS pretty and sprightly little bird is to be found in Great Britain all through the year. It can scarcely be called a common variety, although it is tolerably well distributed over most parts of the country, without being very numerous in any particular locality. It occurs with less frequency in Ireland and the north of Scotland than in any other portions of the kingdom. In different districts the Marsh Tit has had various titles bestowed on it, amongst which may be mentioned Smaller Oxeye, Willow Biter, Joe Bent, and Black Cap.

Although generally known as the Marsh Tit, the bird is by no means an inhabitant of wet or marshy places;

true it is that it is frequently seen by the woody margins of streams or ponds, but it may also be noticed busily at work searching for food in almost any situation where brushwood, copses, and low trees abound.

The habits of the Marsh Tit correspond with those of all the Titmice; sprightly in movement, unceasing and unwearying in searching for food, this little bird seems to make the extermination of the various forms of insect life the great object of its existence; and it may almost be taken for granted that wherever and whenever one is seen, it is on the hunt, either to satisfy its own wants or the requirements of its young family. During the time when the young birds are in the nest this activity is very noticeable and amusing, the visits paid by the parents to their progeny being perpetual. Of course an enormous number of insects are thus destroyed, and it is only just to add that the appetites of the young Titmice are at all times fully equal to the exertions of their parents.

In winter these birds collect in small flocks and roam about from place to place as the supply of food may diminish. In autumn also small companies of these little birds are frequently observed; but rarely exceed six or eight in number, and are probably composed of the members of the same family. Sometimes, however, it associates with small birds of other species. The flight is unsteady and undulating, but is rather rapid, though seldom indulged in for any but short distances.

The note may be said to resemble the syllables "chee-chee" uttered quickly and several times in succession; it has a lively sound, but is shrill and not very melodious.

The nest of the Marsh Titmouse is generally placed in holes of old and decayed willow trees, and in the stumps of

pollards, and usually the entrance is too small to allow of the nest being easily withdrawn. Colonel Montagu says he has "seen this bird excavating the decayed parts of such trees, and artfully carrying the chips in its bill to some distance, always working downwards, and making the bottom for the reception of the nest larger than the entrance." Instances are recorded of the nest having been placed in a rabbit-burrow or deserted rat's hole. It is well built and strongly compacted of wool, moss, or fine dried grass, and lined with the soft seed-down of the willow.

The eggs vary in number from five to eight; they measure seven and a half lines in length by about six lines in breadth; in colour they are similar to the eggs of the other Titmice—white spotted with red.

The female shows great fondness for her home, and only leaves it with considerable reluctance.

The food of the Marsh Tit consists of insects in their various stages of development; it is said to have a reprehensible weakness for bees, and also feeds on different kinds of seeds, particularly those of the sunflower and the thistle; it occasionally visits gardens for the purpose of obtaining the former. In fact, "the Marsh Tit may almost be said to be omnivorous: nothing comes amiss to it. In winter one may easily obtain an opportunity of watching its habits in frosty weather by hanging up a bone, or a lump of suet, or even a tallow candle, in the garden."

The Marsh Tit may be distinguished from the Cole Tit by the absence of the white patch on the nape of the neck, nor has it any white spots on the wing-coverts.

The beak is black; the irides dark hazel; the forehead, crown, and nape deep black; the back, wing-coverts,

and upper tail-coverts ash-brown tinged with green; wing and tail feathers greyish-brown, with the edges rather lighter in colour; the tail even at the end; the chin black; the cheeks, throat, and breast dull greyish-white; flanks, belly, and under tail-coverts tinged with light brown; under-surface of wing and tail feathers grey; legs, toes, and claws bluish-black. The length of the bird is about four inches and a half. There is no perceptible difference in the plumage of the sexes.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

Sylvia luscinia.
Motacilla „
Philomela „

NO bird has had so many tributes paid to it, both by poets and prose writers, as this altogether-unequalled songster. Its voice is unrivalled. The Blackcap, Lark, Blackbird, Thrush, and Robin, all fail to approach this "Queen of Song."

Yet few who have read of the wonderful power of voice that belongs to the Nightingales may have had the exquisite pleasure of hearing one of their delicious vocal contests; for it is when, in a still June night, Nightingale answers to Nightingale, and all the power of their combination of sweet sounds is put forth, that the entrancing influence of the song of the Nightingale is most deeply felt. Once heard, it is never forgotten, be it the plaintive long-drawn-out "Wheet, wheet, wheet!" or the mellow "Jug,

jug, jug!" or any of the other numerous and not-to-be-described phrases contained in the repertory of this beautiful singer.

Perhaps to compensate for so sweet a voice, the plumage of the Nightingale is very plain, although its form is graceful. The whole upper part of the bird is rich chestnut brown, slightly brighter upon the wings; the tail, which is rather long and rounded, is of a reddish-brown; the breast is dull whitish-grey, somewhat tinged with brown; the throat and under part are pale whitish-grey.

The female is with difficulty distinguished from the male, although she may possibly be smaller, and her eye not quite so large and bold. Some say that her throat is lighter.

The young birds are clad in somewhat similar plumage to young Robins, inasmuch as the brown is lighter than that of the adult birds, and the feathers being tipped with buff they have a mottled appearance.

The Nightingale arrives in England about the early part of April, the males preceding the females by about a week, or, at times, even a fortnight. As a rule they fly to their old retreats, although at times they will desert them, even for years, and then return again in augmented numbers. At this time the males continually sing, possibly with the intention of attracting a mate.

The usual haunts of the Nightingale are groves, small shady copses, plantations, woods, quiet gardens, and thick hedgerows, especially where a little thicket has been allowed to grow; and from these retreats, more particularly whilst building the nest, the beautiful song of the Nightingale is delivered both by day and night.

The nest is placed in a hollow of the ground, or in the

roots or stump of a tree, or towards the bottom of a hedge-row. It is built of various materials, including leaves, dry grass-stalks, and bits of bark and fibrous roots, loosely constructed, but lined with finer grasses and horse-hair.

The eggs are generally five in number, and of an olive-green colour.

The food of the Nightingale is almost entirely insectivorous, as it comprises such insects as caterpillars, beetles, moths and flies, small worms, and the larvæ of ants. Some birds also eat fruit, such as elderberries and currants.

The food of the young whilst in the nest is principally composed of small green caterpillars and worms.

Although Nightingales affect certain districts, where many pairs may be found, they notwithstanding keep almost strictly in pairs; and if by chance they meet, they will invariably fight, after the manner of Robins. Even the spirit of their song is at times uttered as if in a tone of acute rivalry, though as a rule it is one impassioned love-story, poured out on behalf of the mate who is so patiently attending to the duties of incubation.

Before leaving England, which happens in July and August, both the young and adult birds moult, but the young ones only partially, as they retain their wing and tail feathers. The song, too, of the adult bird ceases in a great degree some time in June, as soon as the nesting operations are over; yet these latter are often delayed if the first nest is taken or destroyed. The call-note of the bird is varied, sometimes being "Purr, purr!" and again a sort of "Wheet!" uttered somewhat sharply.

The flight is somewhat short, though also capable of much further extension; and is generally from bush to bush, as these birds seldom stray from their usual haunts.

The migration is usually at night, which peculiarity may account in a great degree for their nocturnal singing, especially as the males would thereby attract the later-arriving females.

Some naturalists have gone so far as to imagine that the day-singers were distinct from the nocturnal ones, and others that the parent birds took turns in sitting upon the eggs, and that it was the female whose voice so enchanted their ears in the stillness of evening; but both these ideas are now exploded.

With care and a sufficiency of proper food a Nightingale may be kept in an aviary, but better still in a proper cage. They are very delicate, and will require some artificial heat during winter.

CORMORANT.

. Scale.)

THE CORMORANT.

Pelecanus carbo.

THIS bird is variously known as the Great Cormorant, the Black Cormorant, etc., and is of very peculiar appearance. It is well distributed over Great Britain, and is a well-known *habitué* of all the wild and rocky portions of our sea-coasts.

The Cormorant closely resembles in general appearance the Shag, or Green Cormorant, and no doubt the two birds are frequently mistaken the one for the other. The bird under description is, however, larger, blacker in plumage, and possesses one or two other characteristics not observable in the Shag.

The Cormorant is popularly supposed to be possessed of unusual intelligence, and it has for a long time been used

in some of the Eastern countries to catch fish for its owners. Yarrell states: "The Chinese are said to use them at the present time; the bird is taken to the water-side, a metal ring or leather strap, by way of collar, is put on his neck, and he is then set at liberty to catch a fish, which he brings to hand when called, a small cord being attached to him while in training, to insure his return. Having satisfied the wants of his master, the collar is taken off, and the bird is then allowed to fish for himself."

This practice was also indulged in to a certain extent by our ancestors, as Pennant speaks of one "presented to him by Mr. Wood, Master of the Cormorants to King Charles I."

The bird is very easily domesticated, and in confinement speedily shows signs of attachment and partiality to its owner.

During the breeding season these birds resort to certain stations, and at these periods congregate sometimes in large numbers, appearing to live together in peace and harmony.

The flight is rapid and strong, and very near the surface of the water. They swim and dive with great ease, and are capable of remaining beneath the water for some considerable time. Indeed, the distance accomplished by the bird in these subaqueous journeys is almost the first thing that excites the wonder and admiration of the observer.

The nest is large, and made up of sticks, seaweed, and long coarse grass; the higher parts of rocks and cliffs being the localities generally preferred.

Four, five, and even six eggs are laid, chalky-white in colour, varied with pale blue; the surface of the shell is

rough, and the egg is similarly shaped at each end. In proportion to the size of the bird, the egg is small.

The bird feeds on fish, and, as already stated, is a skilful and successful fisher. Its appetite is voracious, and it not unfrequently pays a heavy penalty for its want of discrimination. Several instances are recorded in which the Cormorant has transfixed an eel with the lower mandible, and, not being able to kill or disengage its prey, has been strangled by the fish twining itself round its captor's throat.

Besides pursuing its food in the water the bird often perches on rocks, posts, or overhanging boughs, where it watches for stray aquatic wanderers that may pass. Any such luckless fish is pursued and caught with unerring certainty.

Although generally speaking an oceanic bird, the Cormorant is no stranger to fresh water; rivers, lakes, and ponds that are abundantly supplied with fish being commonly resorted to. According to some naturalists, the bird has been met with on the Chinese rivers a thousand miles from the sea-shore.

The length of the male bird is about three feet; in the spring and early summer the bill is pale brown, the point horny, hooked, and sharp; irides green; forehead, crown, nape and part of the neck black, mixed with many white, hair-like feathers; the black feathers on the back of the head elongated, and forming a crest; the back and wing coverts dark brown, the feathers margined with black; quill feathers and tail black; lower part of the neck all round, with the breast and all the under-surface of the body, a rich velvet-like bluish-black, except a patch on the thigh, which is white; the legs, toes, and membranes black. The

shape of the foot is peculiar, the outside toe being the longest, and the inner one the shortest; the middle toe is serrated on the inner edge; the tail is stiff and rigid.

The female is the smaller bird, but her crest is often longer than that of the male.

The young birds are dull brown, the plumage in places being mottled with white.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE.
(⅓ Scale.)

THE RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE.

Perdix rufa. *Perdix rubra.*

Tetrao rufus.

THIS bird, which is also called the Guernsey Partridge, and French Partridge, although possessing many characteristics in common with the English bird, is, however, quite distinct from it; and in nearly all localities where the former has gained a footing the latter has gradually become scarcer. The Red-legged Partridge cannot strictly be described as a British bird, though it is comparatively common in many parts of Great Britain; and from the large numbers exposed for sale in our markets and game-shops, it is now thoroughly familiar to most people.

The Red-legged Partridge is said to have been first brought into this country

in the reign of the second Charles, and since then it has been successfully introduced by several noblemen on their estates.

This bird is now found more or less in all parts of England, but it is most plentiful in the counties of Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Dorsetshire, Norfolk, Essex, Yorkshire, and Oxfordshire. It is a native of several of the countries in the south of Europe, and it is also found in the Channel Islands. As an article of food it is not so highly esteemed as its English relative, the flesh being whiter and less succulent; while as an object of sport it certainly does not meet with much appreciation, as it is wild in its habits, and cannot easily be induced to fly, but runs a very considerable distance. When wounded it frequently secretes itself in some hole, rabbit-burrow, or any similar place of concealment.

The favourite haunts of these birds are heaths, commons, waste lands, and the bushes and copses of hilly grounds; they are also to be found, like the common partridge, in stubbles, turnip-fields, and cultivated lands; they run with great quickness, and sometimes indulge in very long flights; indeed, they are occasionally found on the seashore, so completely exhausted and fatigued as to be quite unable to escape capture.

Cornfields and patches of grass or clover are the places commonly selected by the Red-legged Partridge for nesting. The nest is composed of dried grass and leaves, and sometimes a few feathers roughly scratched together. According to some writers, the nest has been found in the thatch of a hayrick. The eggs are of a reddish, yellowish-white, spotted and speckled with brownish-red, and vary

in number from ten to sixteen or eighteen; they are about one inch and a half long, and an inch and a quarter broad. The entire duties of incubation and rearing the young devolve upon the female. Like all the other members of this class, the young ones quit the nest immediately they are hatched, their capabilities for running and feeding being developed at a very early stage of their existence.

They feed on grain, clover, and other seeds, flies, beetles, caterpillars, ants and their eggs, grubs, and small snails, and are much addicted to scratching in the dry earth for food.

When flushed these birds do not always leave the ground simultaneously, as is the case with the common partridge; but one or more will perch on some gate, post, or stone that may be close at hand, and are not unfrequently shot whilst perching in this way. Or they will scatter in all directions, each one running for the nearest hedge with incredible speed. The flight is strong, rapid, and often sustained for some considerable distance.

Even at a distance these birds may very easily be distinguished from the Common Partridge, as they are larger, darker, and the whirring sound made by the wings in flight is altogether different.

The note is said to closely resemble the word "cokileke," and is most frequently heard in the spring.

The plumage of the Red-legged Partridge is handsome. The beak is red, a black streak passes from the nostrils to the eye, and thence downwards and forwards, making a gorget of black, from which streaks and spots of black descend towards the breast; irides are reddish-orange; eyelids vermilion. Back of neck, back, rump, wing and tail coverts are brownish, the plumage being smooth and

blended; tail-feathers chestnut; breast pearl-grey; belly, vent, and under tail-coverts fawn colour; sides, flanks, and thighs are barred with white, black, pearl-grey, and fawn colour; legs and toes red; claws brown. The male has on the leg a rounded knob in the place of a spur.

The female resembles the male, except that her plumage is not so bright, and the markings are not so well defined. She is also devoid of the knob-like spur on the leg.

COLE TIT.
($\frac{4}{5}$ Scale.)

THE COLE TIT.

Parus ater.

THIS pretty and active little bird is very well known in almost every county in Great Britain. It is certainly not so numerous as the Blue Tit, but its geographical distribution is quite as wide and impartial. The places of resort most favoured by these birds are woods, plantations, and shrubberies, especially those containing any sorts of fir trees, birch, or oak; not infrequently they may be observed in little parties in furze-brakes and tangled thickets near streams.

The general habits of the Cole Tit are very similar to those of the Blue Tit; it is incessantly in motion, actively searching for its food among the branches of the trees above mentioned. It is very

careful and persistent in its scrutiny of the bough upon which it is engaged, running nimbly round the under surface and the sides; and then, when its curiosity is satisfied, proceeding with a short fluttering flight to the next.

The Cole Tit is a very sociable little bird, and may frequently be seen in the company of Golden Crests, Lesser Red-polls, and similar small tree-frequenting birds, roving about in quest of food. This consists principally of insects, caterpillars, and beech masts, and seeds of various kinds. Mr. Tegetmeier gives an instance in the *Field* of its feeding on filberts.

This bird remains with us all the year round, and seems to be very little affected by cold weather, as it is found in mid-winter in the most northerly parts of Scotland, and even in higher latitudes.

The flight is seldom a very extended one. The motion of the wings may be described as "a continual fluttering" and the movement altogether weak, short, and unsteady. In the winter-time these birds are fond of roosting in leafy evergreens and the protected sides of haystacks.

The bird makes no pretensions to vocal proficiency; the note is not very harmonious—indeed, it may rather be called harsh and shrill—it sounds very much like the syllables "che-chee, che-chee." When a number of these birds are engaged in searching for food the shrill cheeping note is perpetually uttered. In addition to this note, the bird, when sitting in its nest, makes an unpleasant hissing noise suggestive of snakes if molested or too closely approached.

The nest is very frequently placed in a hole in a tree, and as a rule at a less height from the ground than that of the other Titmice; but various places are made use

of for nesting purposes, such as a hole in a wall or bank, the hollows about the exposed roots of trees, or even the deserted hole of a mouse or rat. Sometimes a small hole will be enlarged by the birds themselves.

The nest is made up of a mass of fine moss, dry grass, hair, and wool; it is always lined very thickly with feathers. Six or eight eggs are laid; they resemble the eggs of the rest of the Titmice—white spotted with red. The male bird is said often to take his turn at sitting, and incubation lasts about fourteen days.

The young birds are at first fed almost entirely on caterpillars; where these birds are plentiful large numbers of caterpillars must be destroyed at these times, as the parents are most assiduous in their attention to their offspring, and may be observed going to and from the nest almost continually.

The adult male has the beak black; the irides hazel; the cheeks and sides of the neck, white; the head, ear-coverts, and the lower part of the sides of the neck before the wing, black; back and wing-coverts bluish-grey, the smaller and larger coverts ending with a spot of white on each feather, forming two conspicuous white bars across the wings; the quill feathers brownish-grey, edged with green; the tertials tipped with dull white; upper tail-coverts greenish fawn colour; tail feathers brownish-grey; tail slightly forked. The chin and throat black; breast dull white; belly, flanks, and under tail-coverts fawn colour, tinged with green; under surface of wing and tail feathers, grey; legs, toes, and claws black. The entire length of the bird is about four inches and a quarter. The Cole Tit may at once be distinguished from the Marsh Tit by the white patch on the nape.

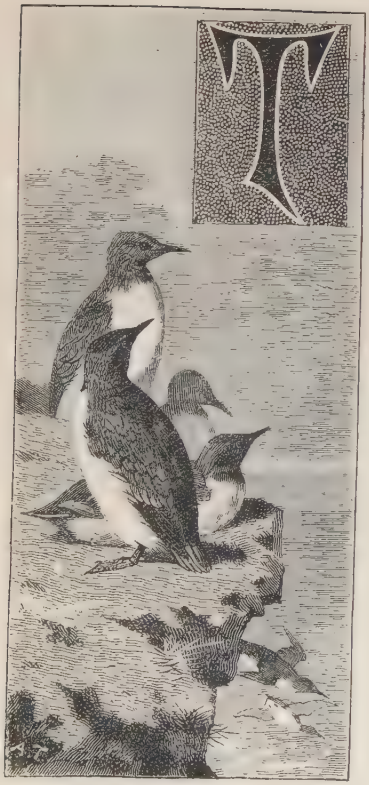
There is very little difference in the plumage of the sexes, but in the young birds the white markings are not so pure, and the black colour about the head is less decided.

The Cole Tit has been met with in Norway, and is said to be a resident in Sweden and Siberia. It is tolerably well distributed over many of the European countries.

GUILLEMOT.

THE GUILLEMOT.

Uria troile.



THIS somewhat odd-looking bird is perhaps better known as the "Foolish Guillemot," and is also, in some places, called the Willock, or Tinkershere. It is one of the commonest of the species, and is met with in the tideway of the open sea at all times of the year, and all round the coasts of Great Britain. During the breeding season these birds assemble in very large numbers on the rocky islands and wild cliffs which are to be found on various portions of our shores, and at these places they breed in the company of Razorbills, Puffins, Gulls, and other sea-going birds. It is worthy of remark that, although the above-mentioned birds make use of the

same spot as a breeding-place at one and the same time, yet no confusion or misunderstandings arise between the occupants. The Guillemots keep a ledge of the rock entirely to themselves; the Razorbills and Gulls do likewise; and we have it on undoubted authority that the various families keep strictly to their own precincts, and do not attempt any intrusion on the domains of their neighbours. This is the more remarkable, as upon some of the larger breeding stations the various birds may be reckoned by many thousands.

The Guillemot lays only one egg; it is large considering the size of the bird, and shaped somewhat like a pear; the colour is a fine bluish-green, more or less blotched and streaked with dark reddish-brown or black; the length is about three inches and a quarter, and nearly two inches in width. The eggs of this bird differ very considerably in colour, some being almost of a white ground, and others with scarcely any secondary markings on them. The Guillemot deposits her egg upon the bare rock, making no attempt to form a nest; incubation lasts nearly a month, during which time the parent bird sits perfectly upright, and certainly presents a very comical appearance. The eggs are considerably prized as articles of food, and the dangerous process of collecting them is on many parts of the coast a regular occupation.

The young Guillemots are at first covered with a sort of bristly hair which appears to be quite impervious to the water. Until the young birds are taken to the water they are fed with portions of fish. It has often puzzled naturalists to account for the *modus operandi* adopted by the old birds in transporting their progeny to the sea. Mr. Waterton, in his account of a visit to the rock-bird breed-

ing localities about Flamborough Head says, "I carried a good telescope with me; through it I saw numbers of young Guillemots diving and sporting on the sea, quite unable to fly; and I observed others on the ledges of the rocks as I went down among them, in such situations that, had they attempted to fall into the waves beneath, they would have been killed by striking against the projecting points of the intervening sharp and rugged rocks; wherefore I concluded that the information of the rock-climbers was correct, viz., that the young birds were carried to the sea on the backs of the old ones."

The Guillemot is essentially a quiet bird, and seldom gives vent to any utterance save an occasional guttural croak. It will even allow its egg to be stolen without making any vocal sign of displeasure or remonstrance.

These birds with their young forsake their breeding stations about the end of August; they then take to the open sea, remaining there both day and night, and in some cases at great distances from the land.

The Guillemot bears a strong general resemblance to the Divers, both in appearance and habits. The food consists of small fishes of various kinds, and also small crustacea. It swims and dives with ease, but is seen to very little advantage on dry land, where its movements are awkward and apparently uncertain.

When submerged, the bird uses the wings as a propelling power, and the rapidity of its motion, coupled with its easy and graceful evolutions, are matters of astonishment to all who have had an opportunity of observing them.

In the summer months the bill, which is of moderate length, strong and pointed, is black; the inside of the

mouth orange; the irides very dark brown; head, neck all round at the upper part, and on the sides and hind part below, the back, tail, and wings, except the secondaries, sooty black; lower part of neck in front, and all the under surface of the body pure white; legs, toes, and their membranes, dark brownish-black; the whole length of the male bird is about eighteen inches. The females are a trifle smaller than the males.

In addition to our own seas, the common Guillemot is found in summer in various parts of Scandinavia, the Faroe Islands, and as far in the Arctic seas as Nova Zembla and Spitzbergen. It is also met with on the coasts of Holland and France, and very occasionally in the Mediterranean Sea.

OYSTER-CATCHER.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE OYSTER-CATCHER.

Hæmatopus ostralegus.

THIS handsome and active bird is tolerably common on the shores of Great Britain, and may be generally found where long ridges of shingle banks, and beds of low rocks, promise a plentiful supply of mussels and other shell-fish. The very strongly marked contrasts in the plumage, which are so noticeable in flight, have gained for it the name of Sea-pie, and perhaps it is better known under this title than any other.

The Oyster-catcher is not so entirely devoted to the sea-shore as its names might imply, for it is very frequently seen on the banks of large rivers and lakes, many miles inland; and in some parts of the country it migrates

every summer into the interior, and breeds upon the banks of rivers and small islets. At these times the Oyster-catcher feeds upon the worms and grubs to be found in pastures and grass fields; but the ordinary food consists of limpets, mussels and other bivalves, sea-worms, and marine insects.

The bill of this bird is well worthy of notice, as it is admirably adapted for procuring the particular food to which its owner is so partial. It is about three inches in length, greatly compressed, and terminates in a thin vertical wedge; indeed, just the instrument to insert between the two portions of a bivalve and extract the contents. The Oyster-catcher is quite an adept in the use of his bill, and it is said that even the most stubbornly fixed limpets are dislodged with ease and rapidity.

In the winter months these birds congregate in flocks differing considerably in size; but when the spring approaches these flocks are broken up and the birds pair for the breeding season; but the Oyster-catcher is naturally of social habits, and even after pairing many couples will proceed to the same locality and breed together.

Very little trouble is expended on the nest, as in the majority of cases the eggs are laid in a slight hollow scratched in the bare shingly ground. Four eggs are usually laid, of a yellowish stone colour, spotted with ash-grey and dark brown; they are about two inches in length and one inch and a half in breadth.

The male is very attentive to his mate during incubation, and both birds exhibit great anxiety to decoy or frighten away any troublesome intruder. The female sits for about three weeks, and the young birds when hatched are covered with a pretty soft down of a greyish-brown colour.

The Oyster-catcher is very easily domesticated. Some years ago a flock was kept in the grounds of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, where they attracted a great deal of attention. The writer well recollects an Oyster-catcher in the west of England that lived many years in a fowl-yard; it was quite tame, and associated with the fowls and pigeons in the most friendly way. According to Pennant, the Finns hold this bird in the utmost detestation; for they suppose that when they are engaged in seal-chasing it gives timely notice to the seals of the approach of the hunters, and by that means frightens away their game. The peasants in the north-eastern parts of Scotland, however, regard it very differently, and consider its early appearance inland as a sure sign of a mild and productive season.

In addition to Great Britain, the Oyster-catcher is found on all the coasts of Southern Europe, Denmark, Sweden, and the Scandinavian shores; and it is said to be well-known throughout Russia, Siberia, and Kamschatka, and to breed on most of the large Arctic flats.

The length of the Oyster-catcher is about sixteen inches; the beak at the base is deep orange, growing lighter towards the tip; the irides crimson; the eyelids reddish-orange, and there is a white spot below the eye; the head, neck, upper part of the breast, and greatest part of the wings are black; there is a white bar across the wings, and the tail is white about half-way from the rump, the end half being black. All the under portions of the body and wings are white. The legs and toes (the latter being three in number and all directed forward) are of a purplish flesh colour; the claws black. In the winter months the birds have a gorget of white round the front of the neck, and in

some instances this mark is retained over a great portion of the spring.

The Oyster-catcher is a rather shy bird, not easy to be approached closely except during the breeding season, when it becomes bolder and apparently less cautious. When alarmed it utters a peculiar shrill whistling cry, which also may be often heard at night as the birds are going to or returning from their feeding grounds.

Occasional instances have been noted of this bird having been met with almost entirely white, and others of a pale-fawn colour

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